OCTOBER 1982 NUMBER 56

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# THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

## Unnight:

World-Setting for
*Space Opera*

EXPLOSIVE SCATTER GUN
FOR *TRAVELLER*
*PIRATES & PLUNDER*
FEATURED REVIEW
METAMORPHOSING MONSTERS:
*D&D* TO TFT
GENCON REPORT
AND 7 PAGES OF REVIEWS

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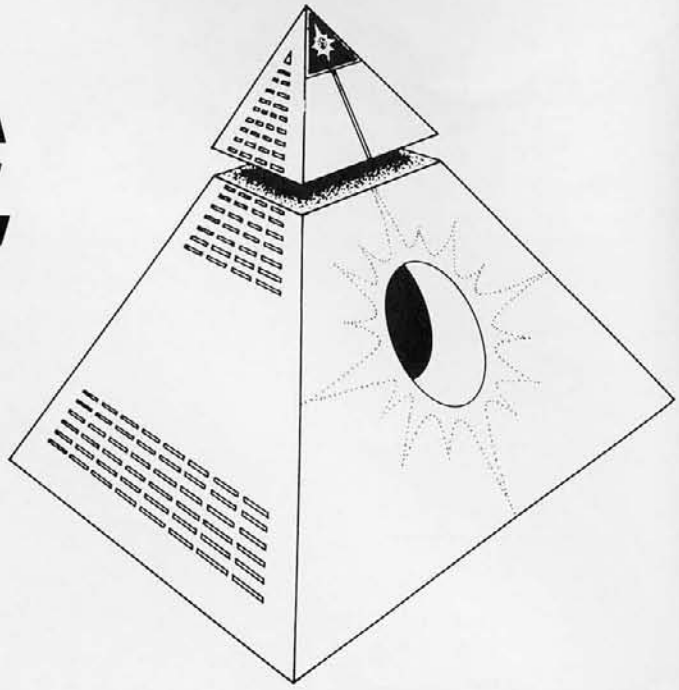
# STAR VENTURE



As your fleet of two destroyers, a cruiser, a tanker and a troop transport moved into orbit around the planet Omega in the Polaris system, the first blasts of lethal energy flashed from the forts of the colony below. Already your allies have landed troops and alien warriors on the other side of the planet. Very soon the heavy planetary fighting vehicles of their ground forces will engage the enemy's colony defenses. You begin to fire your beam weapons, holding your missiles and powerful fighters until just the right moment. The message is received; your allies have begun the attack. You launch your missiles and fighters and start your transport toward the surface and with it you launch into another Star Venture . . .

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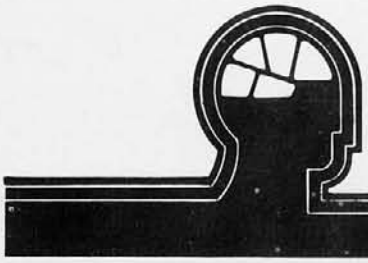

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# THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 56 — OCTOBER, 1982

# IN THIS ISSUE

Seems I just can't win.

I had it made. This issue was going to have *every single article* I'd promised for it in the Next Issue box from issue 55. What happens? Along comes one of the best pieces of news we've had in a year: We can now return TSG to a slick-paper format. But I have to pull *two* of the promised articles . . . (whimper, scuffle, sniffle, sob)

This issue is heavily (almost exclusively) RPG material — not by editorial preference, but we got a lot in from contributors. TFT, *D&D, Traveller, Space Opera,* and (believe it or not) *Pirates & Plunder* are all heavily represented. For more news on the wonderful world of slick, check out *Where We're Going,* which starts on page 12, and also includes an overview of GenCon. *Metal* touches on many of the miniatures industry's Origins releases, and Scanner is as ~~ɥoʞʎ~~ newsy as usual. Until next month . . .

—Aaron Allston

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# Metamorphosing Monsters:

## Adapting *D&D* Creatures to TFT

by Steve Jackson

A lot of you RPG fans out there are playing ***The Fantasy Trip***; according to *Game Merchandising,* it's currently the second most popular role-playing game in the U.S. But one thing TFT lacks, compared to almost every other major fantasy system, is a "monster book." GMs are limited to the creatures in the original ***In the Labyrinth*** book, plus a few introduced in various supplements.

However, TSR's ***Dungeons & Dragons*** does have a monster book – in fact, it has several. In addition to the official ***Monster Manual,*** there have been any number of privately published collections of beasties. The Manual itself has over 350 different creature descriptions . . . and while some of them are trite (giant frogs) or repetitions of standard fantasy material (men, dwarves, elves, orcs) there is also a lot of original material. Such creatures as the ankheg, bullette, gelatinous cube, and rust monster are purely ***D&D*** creations.

True, the descriptions in the ***Monster Manual*** are incompatible with TFT. But this is easily dealt with. This article will offer a system for "translating" beasts to the TFT system. The translation is not exact; creatures from the Manual may be more or less deadly when converted to TFT. But it's fairly close, and it will certainly provide you with a horrid new batch of beasties.

Note that I've written this treatment in terms of ***Original D&D*** and variants; armor classes and hit dice may have to be modified for stats in ***Advanced D&D.***

To take the characteristics in the order they're listed in the Manual:

*Frequency* is self-explanatory. Page 5 of the Manual gives "official" percentage chances for each frequency classification, but there's no real reason for you to be bound by these if the structure of your world demands otherwise. If a certain swamp is crawling with catoblepas, so be it! But remember that any thick concentration of a normally-rare monster would probably be known to natives of the area, and would not come as a total surprise to adventurers who had bothered to inquire about local conditions.

*Number Appearing* is also a general guideline; use it or not, as you see fit. As a guide to the "social" habits of the creature, it's good. If you're slavishly rolling dice, that's not so good. Use your judgment!

*Armor Class,* in the ***D&D*** system, is a catch-all for physical protection, magical defense, and the innate difficulty-to-hit caused by a creature's small size or high dexterity. TFT handles this concept by using two different numbers: a subtraction from the attacker's DX (for a target that is hard to hit) and a subtraction from damage done (if the target is tougher than unprotected human flesh). To translate a creature's "armor class" into the two TFT stats, proceed as follows:

(1) Compare the creature's natural armor with the list below to get a "natural armor class." This is the armor class the creature would have if it had no magical defenses and did not move about. Read across from the natural armor class to the "hits stopped" column. This shows how many hits, in TFT terms, that sort of armor absorbs from each blow that strikes it.

| NATURAL ARMOR CLASS | | HITS STOPPED IN TFT |
|---|---|---|
| AC 9: | *soft body without protection* | 0 |
| AC 8: | *thin chitin or light fur or shield only* | 1 |
| AC 7: | *leather armor, medium fur, or light scales* | 2 |
| AC 6: | *leather + shield, or heavier fur or scales* | 3 |
| AC 5: | *chainmail, or heavy reptile scales* | 3 |
| AC 4: | *mail and shield, or medium dragon scales* | 4 |
| AC 3: | *plate armor, or a shell* | 5 |
| AC 2: | *plate and shield, heavy shell, or old dragon scales* | 6 |

(2) Take the difference between the creature's *natural* armor class and its *actual* armor class as given in the Manual. If the difference is only 1, ignore it. If it is more than 1, it will probably be due to either magic powers or great elusiveness on the part of the creature. Example: the Morkoth is shown as being vaguely octopoid; this would imply soft skin (AC 9). However, it is described as AC 3, which is much harder to hit. This difference of 6 must be accounted for. We do this by assessing a DX- on any attack against the creature. For every 2 points difference between the natural armor class and the "real" AC from the Manual, subtract 1 from the DX of any attack against it. Thus, the Morkoth, with its AC 9 skin and a "true" AC of 3 has a 6-point differential. Half of 6 is 3; any attack against a Morkoth in a TFT adventure will be at DX -3. However, the AC 9-equivalent skin means that no hits are stopped; if a sword hits home on a Morkoth, it's in trouble.

*Move* gives a distance in inches representing the creature's speed. The listings

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# New AH GAMES for Fall-Xmas '82!

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Suggested Retail **$6**

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in the Manual may be considered suspect; for instance, a human moves 12", a dwarf only 6". Are dwarves only half as fast as humans? Not likely . . .

For any humanoid type, use MA 8, 10, or 12, depending on whether the creature seems as though it should be generally slow, average, or fast when compared to a man; ignore the "Move" listing entirely.

For animals, use the MA for a comparable creature from TFT: ITL.

For peculiar and unique monsters (which is what you should be using the Manual for anyhow) allow 1 MA for each inch of movement. All MA should be even numbers. A ground MA of more than 16" is very unlikely except for a riding creature. Note that some creatues will have ground, water, and/or air speeds listed, all of which may be different.

*Hit Dice* refers to a creature's vulnerability; it is a measure of how many hits it can *take,* not how much damage it does. However, it can function as a guide to the range of strengths appropriate for creatures of that type. A 6-sided die (which is the type used for "hit dice" in the Manual) has an average roll of 3.5; therefore, a "6-die creature" can take an average of 21 hits, but could conceivably take as few as 6 hits, or as many as 36. In TFT terms, this would mean an average ST of 21, with a range of 6 to 36.

However, the range of hits in the ***Monster Manual,*** figured this way, is greater than in TFT. The *strongest* beginning human character in a ***D&D*** game can take only 8 hits – but he will soon advance to levels where he can take 60 or more hits. Contrast this with TFT, where a beginning character is likely to start with a ST of at least 10 – possibly up to 18! – but is unlikely to get much past 24. The disparity in the abilities of creatures is equally wide. In TFT terms, creatures from the Manual are very puny – until they begin to get strong, when they are very strong indeed.

Therefore, to derive a reasonable TFT strength from the hit points of a creature from the ***Monster Manual***:

If a creature has 1 or 2 hit dice, multiply its average hit points by 3 to get an average TFT strength.

If a creature has 3 or 4 hit dice, multiply its average hit points by 2.5.

If a creature has 5 or 6 hit dice, multiply its average hit points by 2.

If a creature has 7 or more hit dice, multiply its average hit points by 1.5. Again, we are talking about averages. The maximum hit points (i.e., TFT strength) of any creature will be nearly twice the average for that type!

*% in Lair* is not a statistic you'll need at all, unless you're generating your whole adventure by die rolls. You're not, are you?

*Treasure Type* refers the Manual user to a series of lists. Check these to see what general sort of treasure the authors intended the creature to have – then scale it up or down to fit your own campaign. Most of the time these lists are much too generous.

*Number of Attacks* may be taken as written. Note that many creatures will be surprisingly powerful because they have several attacks.

*Damage/Attack* gives the amount of damage a creature does when it hits. (A creature with multiple attacks may do different damage with each one.) The ***Monster Manual*** gives this in terms of "ranges" – for instance, "1-6" should be read "1 to 6," or "1d6." Unfortunately for the TFT player, some creatures attack with 4-sided dice, some with 6-siders, some with 8-siders . . . and so on. You

have two options here: you can either acquire polyhedral dice and roll them as per the book, or you can work out probable damage done and translate it to d6 terms. Example: A creature is listed as doing "2-16" hits damage. A range of 2 to 16 is achieved only by rolling 2d8 (a pity the authors couldn't have used that nomenclature). An 8-sided die has an average roll of 4.5, so two of them have an average result of 9. This can be approximated by rolling three 6-siders and subtracting 1 from the result; 3d6-1, or simply "3-1" gives an average result of 9.5 and a range of 2-17, which is close enough.

Some monsters, especially those from "unofficial" sources, will do a truly astounding amount of damage. You have three choices with these: leave them out of your campaign, scale them down to a reasonable level, or save them for those players who have built up very strong and well-equipped characters. It's a matter of the GM's personal style.

*Special Attacks* are too numerous to describe individually, and most of them tie in to magic spells, etc., in the ***D&D*** game system. The general solution should be to find a TFT magic spell that approximates the effect of the special attack. This may then be assigned to the creature, either as an innate ability (like the TFT basilisk) or, for an intelligent creature, as a spell known and used in the normal fashion. Innate abilities may or may not require use of ST points or the making of a DX roll; let the description of that particular special attack be your guide.

Translation of special abilities requires the most care and creativity of any part of this process. Be sure to cover all the bases – duration and area of effect, defenses if any, range – or there'll be an argument in the middle of the game.

*Special Defenses* should be handled as for special attacks. Most can be treated as magic spells, increased difficulty to hit, or extra armor protection.

*Magic Resistance* is a concept not found in TFT at all, except in certain very rare cases (i.e., demons) which are *completely* resistant to hostile magic. Therefore, ignore it! This will help balance certain creatures that are otherwise much too powerful for the average TFT world.

*Intelligence* as given in the Manual, translates roughly as follows:

Non-intelligent: IQ 0.
Animal: IQ 4 for reptiles
IQ 5 for most mammals
IQ 6 for intelligent mammals
Semi-intelligent (i.e., apes): IQ 7
Low intelligence: IQ 8 or 9
Average human intelligence: IQ 10 or 11
Very intelligent: IQ 12 to 14
Highly intelligent: IQ 15 to 18
Genius, supergenius: IQ 19 and up

*Alignment* is not used at all in TFT, but can still be used as a guide to "personality." Chaotics may do anything they please; true chaotics are rare. Lawfuls will follow a strict code of behavior, though you may not agree with it or even know what it is. Evils will behave selfishly and attack if they can. Goods will not attack unless they perceive you as evil; anything that threatens them is likely to be considered evil. Neutrals will act for their own convenience, which will usually mean letting others alone – but many "neutral" creatures are *hungry*. The average party of player-characters, incident-

ally, considers itself to be lawful good and is actually chaotic neutral.

*Size* may be given either in height or length. This will tell you how large the counter should be. Allow one hex of size for each 3 feet of length or width. If a creature's size consists mostly of height, it may be a two- or three-hex counter anyway, like a standard giant in TFT.

*Psionic Ability* may be ignored entirely, or treated as an innate magic ability of the appropriate type (usually telepathy). If you take the latter course, "psionic" spells should cost the user no strength, but require the standard roll vs. IQ.

This completes the roster of characteristics listed in the Manual. It also gives us all the characteristics needed to play TFT, with one important exception: dexterity. Although the ***D&D*** system has a "dexterity" characteristic, it is not used to determine the hit probability; the success of attacks is determined by a complicated matrix, involving "levels" and monsters' hit dice.

Therefore, the best way to assign a dexterity to any given creature involves an assessment of that creature's overall formidability, rather than any one characteristic. Imprecise though it may be, the best solution is simply to assign a DX that *seems* right for that creature, by comparison with known creature types and the following guidelines:

| DX | Probability of Hitting | General Assessment |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | .5% | *Worst possible DX.* |
| 4 | 1.8% | |
| 5 | 4.6% | |
| 6 | 9.2% | *The lowest DX at which a creature has any reasonable chance of hitting in a combat of normal length.* |
| 7 | 16.2% | |
| 8 | 25.9% | *Clumsy human.* |
| 9 | 37.5% | *Beginning to be dangerous.* |
| 10 | 50.0% | *Hits exactly half the time.* |
| 11 | 62.5% | |
| 12 | 74% | |
| 13 | 83.8% | *Formidable.* |
| 14 | 90.7% | *Deadly, if it does any damage at all when it hits.* |
| 15 | 95.4% | |
| 16 | *** | *A roll of 16 or more is an automatic miss, so a DX of 16 or more is only significant in a situation where subtractions will apply.* |

Some typical animal comparisons: bear DX 10, ape DX 12, wolf DX 14. Some "imaginary" monsters are likely to be strong but very clumsy, balancing high damage with low hit probability. An important note: In TFT, dexterity is probably the single most important factor determining how dangerous a creature is. A beast that does, for instance, 3 dice damage is laughable at DX 7, and murderous at DX 12. A creature with DX 14 or more is formidable even if it does very little damage! If a monster has a DX higher than that of the fighters that face it, those fighters are in *trouble.*

The other important thing to keep in mind when "translating" monsters – and this holds true no matter what game systems are involved – is to *work them out beforehand.* If you're working straight from a book, you can tell your players, "You see three Whatsits," look up Whatsits on page 34 of your Beastie Book, and go from there. You *shouldn't* play that ignorantly, but you can. But with translated creatures, you have to do your homework. Adapting the statistics *does* take time; do it beforehand, and write everything down. (A 3 x 5 card for each creature type is good for this.) That way you won't waste time during play – and you can be sure that your translation is a complete one, and that oddball factors like special attacks have been fully covered.

So . . . the next time your players are wandering through Cidri, and they spy an orange-brown, armadillo-like creature and rush in with swords swinging . . . surprise, surprise! Happy monstering.

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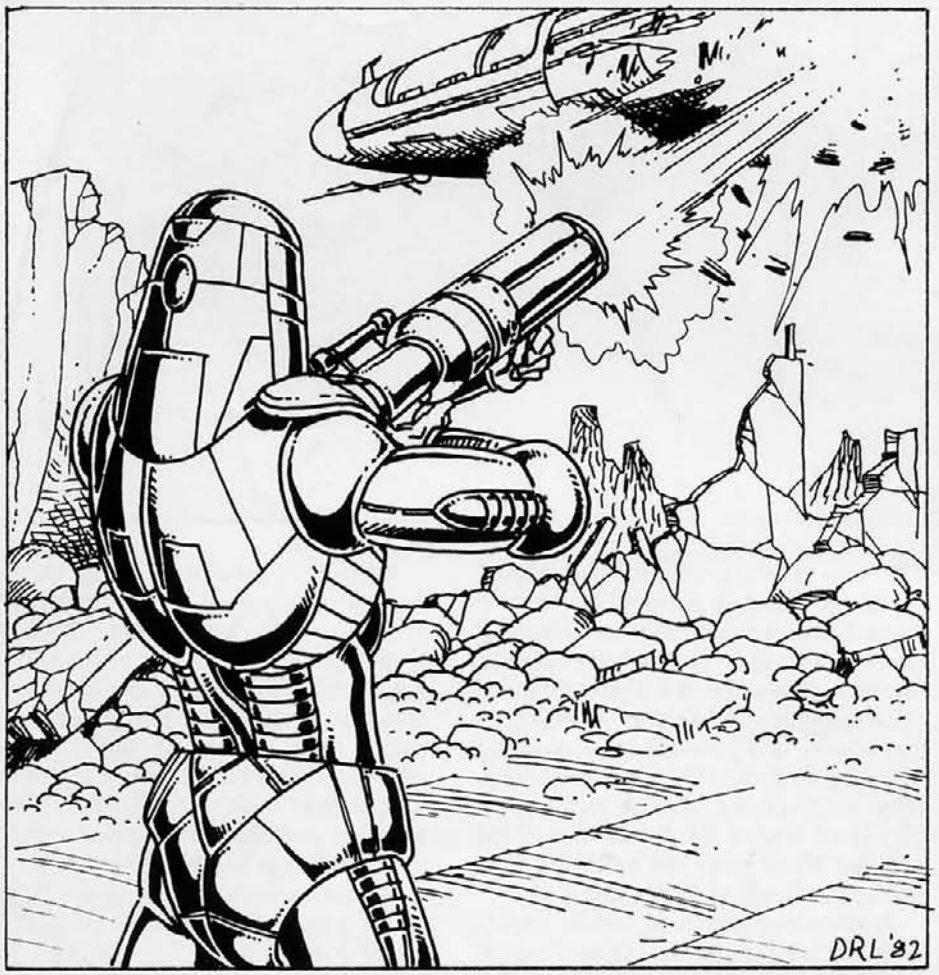



# The Splat Gun

## by William A. Barton

The Explosive Scatter Gun is one of the favorite heavy weapons of covert operations teams, due primarily to the extensive amount of damage a single burst from the weapon can do. It is ideal for hit-and-run raids in which the goal is to inflict as much damage in as short a time as possible. Originally developed by the Aslan, and later copied and adapted for human use by unscrupulous arms manufacturers on the fringes of Imperial space, the weapon is more commonly known as the "Splat Gun" (any target hit goes "splat") or the "Can Opener."

The Splat Gun is highly illegal anywhere in the Imperium and Imperial-controlled space. In fact the weapon is outlawed on *all* worlds in known space except those with a law level of 0 – and it is strictly controlled on most of these, depending on government type. Note that the Aslan military version is exempt from this outlaw status and can be found in use by military units in the Hierate and by Aslan mercenary units outside the Imperium; the Aslan version, however, is unusable by all but the most powerful of humans.

Anyone found in possession of a Splat Gun in Imperial space is subject to a 20-year jail term in a planetary or an Imperial prison (though liberal bribes can possibly cause authorities to overlook mere possession). Use of a Splat Gun in the commission of a crime, particularly one which causes damage to property or loss of life, however, carries by Imperial regulation a mandatory death penalty (bribes to avoid this must be enormous – more than most characters will be able to afford). Paradoxically, a number of restrictive governments on the fringes of the Imperium and in the Beyond outfit their own armed forces with these weapons; they are excellent for stopping rioters.

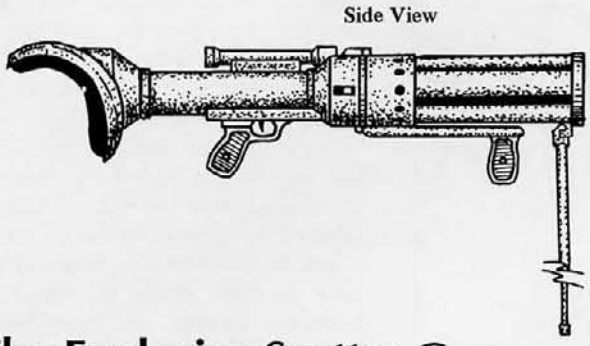
The weapon was originally developed by the Aslan at about Tech Levels 10-11 to replace the RAM Grenade Launcher as an anti-armor, anti-battledress weapon for use against higher-tech-level troops. It proved highly suitable for that role; its 10-shell burst was capable of opening up a suit of battledress or a lightly-armored ATV or APC. It also proved capable of inflicting damage on more heavily armored AFVs, thanks to the mixture of HEAP/HE shells in its single-burst magazine and its phased firing nature (this triggers some of the shells in the burst microseconds before others, setting up a "drilling" action when the shells hit the target).

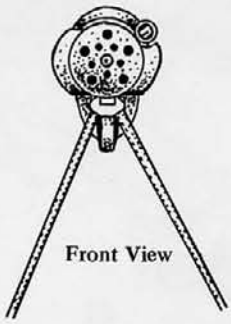
The weapon is of a medium-length tubular design, resembling a short, thick bazooka 850 mm in length. A padded cut-away shoulder stock curves over and around the shoulder, supporting the weapon and absorbing some of its substantial recoil. In front of this is the pistol grip trigger and sighting scope. About halfway along is a small flash shield, forward of which is the chamber where the 10-round magazine is inserted. The remainder of its length is the barrel cluster.

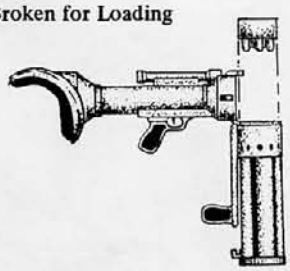
A secondary hand grip is located near the end of the barrel cluster, just behind the receptacle for the optional telescoping bipod attachment. The gun breaks at the flash shield for loading. The magazine is inserted into the chamber and rotated 1 cm clockwise until a click is heard, signifying it has locked into place. A small catch unlocks the magazine, which is removed by rotating counterclockwise and lifting from the chamber. Though there will be slight variations on different models, most Splat Guns will conform to this basic configuration. All models weigh about 5 kg.

The base price of the Splat Gun is CR 3,500. The price of a single magazine is CR 250. Each magazine weighs 1 kg, mainly due to the sturdy construction required to prevent it from disintegrating upon firing. The optional bipod costs CR 150, weighs 500 gm and stands 1.5 meters high when fully extended. Prices on the black market, especially in areas where the gun is illegal, will be much higher.

The magazine holds ten shells, half HEAP, half HE. All ten shells in the magazine are fired simultaneously when the trigger is pulled, in a phased sequence, the HEAP slightly ahead of the HE. At medium range, the 10-round cluster can destroy or heavily damage anything up to




# The Explosive Scatter Gun

heavily-armored AFVs; even at long and very long range it can do a lot of damage. The shells travel in a tight pattern until they reach medium range, when they begin to spread out. An ATV- or air/raft-sized target will still take all ten shells at medium range, unless the aim is slightly off; a human-sized target at that range will take about four. By long range and very long range, the shells have spread into an even wider pattern, so that the "group hits for shotguns" rule may be used, with each of four adjacent human-sized targets taking two shells each and up to two adjacent ATV-sized targets splitting the burst between them. It is not recommended that targets at short range be fired at unless the firer is wearing battledress or similar protection, as he would be caught in the backlash of the explosion and may take one-quarter damage (on a roll of 7+, 10+ if in battledress). Firing a Splat Gun at a target at close range is a most effective (and messy) way to commit suicide.

Damage done by the gun is 4d *per shell.* Range DMs are: Close = (-3); Short = (+1); Medium = +6; Long = 0; Very Long = -4. Armor DMs are: None = +5; Jack = +5; Mesh = +4; Cloth = +3; Reflect = +5; Ablat = +4; Battle = +1; each level of AFV armor = -2. The Required DX for the Splat Gun is 8, with a -3 DM for DX of 7-. Advantageous DX is 11 with a +1 DM for DX of 11+. In addition, it takes a ST of 8+ to fire the Splat Gun effectively due to the tremendous recoil; if ST is less than 8 there will be an additional -2 DM to hit and the arm of the firer will be numbed for 1-6 rounds and may even be dislocated (roll 6- on 2d for 1d damage due to dislocation).

Any character firing a Splat Gun, regardless of ST, must roll ST or less on 2d to avoid being knocked down by the recoil unless braced against something solid, wearing battledress, or using a tripod. It will take a character who is knocked down one round to stand up or move to prone firing position, plus one round to position the gun. A character wearing battledress does not risk dislocation, but if his unadjusted ST (before doubling for battledress) is 3-, he still risks numbing his arm (roll 6- for 1-3 rounds numbness). No function (firing, loading, etc.) may be performed with a numb arm. Use of the optional bipod with the Splat Gun will add an additional +1 DM to hit.

It takes two rounds to replace a spent magazine with a new one, three if the firer is treated as evading. If the bipod is being used, the reloading time is three rounds, four if evading.

Whenever the result of a to-hit roll is an unmodified 2, the weapon has jammed and does not fire. It will take 2d6 combat rounds to clear the gun, 3d6 if evading. If snub pistol ammo is used in the magazine (see below), an unmodified roll of 2 indicates that the gun has exploded (a saving roll of 11+ means it jams instead, as above). The firer and any characters within 3 meters must roll 10+ to avoid 1d6 damage if it explodes. If the roll is successful, characters take only 1d damage (all the ammo didn't explode). Characters adjacent to firer need not roll if they are in battledress, but still take 1d damage. The firer, even if in battledress, must still make a saving roll or take full damage. The gun is useless if it explodes.

Note: Halve all times listed for reloading and clearing jams if the character using the Explosive Scatter Gun has a specific skill in the weapon (ex-Terrorist or trained by one with the skill), due to familiarity.

If you are using the ***Azhanti High Lightning*** combat rules, or the ***Traveller*** AFV article in TSG 43, the stats for the Explosive Scatter Gun are as follows: Effective = 50m (25) +4; Long = 250m (20) +2; Very Long = 500m (15).

While it is capable of doing massive damage within its range limitations, the Splat Gun does have definite liabilities. In addition to the amount of time necessary to reload the weapon and its extreme illegality, there is the problem of availability, both of the gun and its ammunition. Even on the black market, the Explosive Scatter Gun is not readily available due to the penalties associated with its possession in Imperial space.

Whenever a character is attempting to locate a Splat Gun, a roll of 10+ will indicate that one is indeed available for purchase somewhere on the planet. Where and how a character finds it will be up to the referee. DMs that apply to availability: +1 if attempting to locate it on the black market; +1 if the population of the world is 9+; -2 if population is 3-; +1 if the law level is 0; -1 if the law level is 7+; -10 if tech level is 3-; -1 if searching within the borders of the Imperium; -2 if searching in a one-subsector radius of Core subsector; +1 if searching within the borders of the Aslan Hierate or its colonies (but chances are a Splat Gun found there will be of the Aslan variety, usable only by a character with a ST of 13+). If a supplier is located, he will have 1d6/2 (minimum of 1) guns available. If the supplier is a black-market contact, the price of the gun will be 1d6 x base price (minimum 150% cost if roll is a 1). Streetwisdom may help somewhat in getting a better price, as may the ***Merchants & Merchandise*** skill of Trade & Speculation, at the referee's discretion. A bipod will be available for each gun.

Just managing to locate a Splat Gun is no guarantee, however, that an ample supply of ammunition will be available. Splat Gun ammo is *not* sold separately outside of factory-sealed magazines, so the amount available is limited by the number of magazines a dealer has. Magazines *can* be reused at some risk by sub-

stituting snub pistol ammunition (either HE, HEAP, or both) for the regular shells. The fit is not exact and some problems may result from the use of snub ammo, but it is, at least, readily available. It takes one round to load the snub shells into a Splat Gun magazine, character considered evading. Explosive Scatter Gun magazines are somewhat easier to locate than the weapon itself. Roll 9+ for the magazines to be available, using the same DMs as for locating the gun, with an additional +1 if any Splat Guns are available on the planet.

There will be 1d6 magazines available per gun for sale or 2d6-4 magazines if the gun is not available (minimum of 1 magazine in either case). Black-market sources, however, may have up to 3d6 magazines available, but any number over the previously-noted rolls will be used magazines filled with snub ammo and sealed up as if new. Except under close inspection by a character familiar with the gun and its ammo, these will be indistinguishable from new magazines.

The price of a magazine from a black market source will be 2d6 x base price (halved if character discovers it to be a used magazine).

When snub pistol ammo is used in a Splat Gun magazine, the gun will gradually be damaged, and there is always a chance that the magazine will explode, dependant on the number of times the magazine has been reused with snub shells. Roll 14+, with a +1 DM each time snub ammo is fired from a used magazine, for an explosion. In any event, a magazine may not be used more than eight times in this manner (or more than twice using actual Splat Gun shells) due to damage resulting from the slightly mismatched ammo. On the 9th time a magazine is used, it will always explode. An exploding magazine will do 4d x the number of shells it holds in damage to the firer and adjacent characters, and the gun will be destroyed.

A -3 DM to hit is imposed whenever snub shells are used due to the inexact fit of the shells in the magazine and chamber. Impose an additional -1 to hit if the target is in battledress or an armored vehicle unless half or more of the mix consists of HEAP shells, and a -1 DM if the same magazine is used more than four times. For every 25 times a Splat Gun is fired using snub shells, a cumulative -1 DM to hit is added to the gun *permanently* to reflect the damage caused to the barrel by the mismatched ammo. If improper ammo is used too often, the gun becomes worthless. Only an experienced gunsmith (Mechanical 4+ or Explosive Scatter Gun 2+ and Mechanical 2+) can determine the extent of and repair such damage. The cost to repair the gun is 25% of its base price (50% if it has more than a -4 permanent DM).

Since black-market sources are not the most reliable, guns purchased in this manner may already be damaged due to use of snub ammo, just as magazines may be used ones filled with snub ammo. The referee should secretly roll 2d for each gun or magazine (other than the extras that will always be used) purchased. A roll of 3- indicates that the gun has been fired more than 25 times with snub shells; roll 1d6/2 for the permanent DM (minimum -1). A roll of 4 exactly indicates the gun has been fired 4d times with snub shells (4-24) and will develop the -1 DM on the 25th firing. A roll of 6- for a magazine indicates it is a used magazine with snub shells; roll 2d6-4 to determine the number of times it has been fired previously (minimum 1). (If you're not buying on the black market, roll 2 exactly on 2d for a magazine to be used and loaded with snub shells.) Weapons and ammo purchased in Aslan space will never have been used with snub ammo, especially those that are strictly Aslan design; there are strict laws against such practices in the Hierate, the Aslan having too much respect for the weapon to tolerate misuse of it.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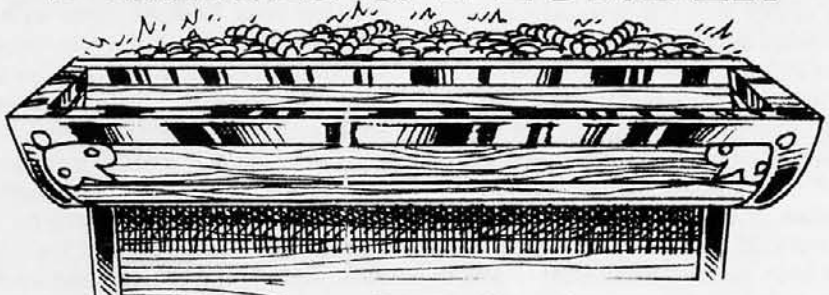
# Featured Review:

# Pirates & Plunder



## by W. G. Armintrout

Yaquinto's new role-playing pirate game is one of the strangest products I've ever seen: a wild mix of good and bad in the same box.

The box itself is gorgeous, as is the artwork throughout this game. Inside, you'll find three rulebooks, a character sheet pad, seven game aids, and two uninked (Gamescience) dice.

***Pirates and Plunder*** is unique because it is designed to be played in ready-made "episodes" rather than in GM-designed adventures. Three of these episodes are in the first book, and are designed to teach both the players and the GM the rules in a modular method.

The idea is that the GM can pick up Book I – *The Basic Game* – right out of the box, read the prologue, and then gather together a gang to play the game. The book provides some material for him to read to the players, explaining that they are pirates who were captured by the Spanish while raiding the mainland, then adjourns to the character generation rules.

In the Basic Game, each player may have one Major character, one Supporting character, and any number of Extra characters. Major characters receive a +3 on most attribute rolls; supporting characters get a +1. The attributes are:

*Rolled on 2d10:* Strength, Agility, Vision, Hearing, Stamina, Wounds, Intelligence, and Training for Muskets, Pistols, Swords, and Fists.

*Rolled on a Table:* Height, Weight, Handedness, Luck/Adrenaline, Movement, Nationality, and Religion.

*Derived from Other Attributes:* Senses, Reload, Languages, Religious Fervor, and "to hit" numbers for Muskets, Pistols, Swords, Fists, and Throwing.

When characters are completed, the rulebook resumes its narrative. It explains that the characters have been placed in a remote Spanish jail, and that circumstances have forces the pirates to fight non-player pirates in order to get their gruel. This first episode is forced on the players to show how fist fights work, and four "extras" are provided to do the fighting.

Fist fight rules are unusual. Each turn, each player gets one chance to hit one other character. An attack is made by rolling 2d10 and checking the Hand-to-Hand Combat Table, where there is a basic 45% chance to hit. However, the characters must compare their Fists-To-Hit numbers – the player with the highest number gets the difference in the numbers as a bonus to his die roll. In addition, a character with agility four or more higher than his opponent gets a free "fast attack" with die roll plusses, depending on the difference in agility.

Damage is taken as stun points, subtracted from stamina. Stamina loss causes immediate drops in all attributes. Loss of all stamina results in unconsciousness. However, all stamina points can be healed in a peaceful half-hour.

After the compulsory fist fight, the narrative picks up again. This time, the characters are dragged from jail and forced to duel with non-player pirates in front of the Spanish. Sword fight rules are now introduced.

The rules for sword fights are identical to fist fight rules, with these exceptions: Damage now results in wounds. Wounds are deducted from the Wound Rating, causing attributes to decline in the same way that stamina loss does. Wounds are also docked from each area of the body (head, arm, groin, etc.), which can cause a character to lose his offensive abilities. (Most often, characters are left as "walking wounded" rather than actually killed in combat.)

With the sword fight out of the way, the narrative picks up again. The characters are released from jail by Old Billy (an NPC), and are urged to kill everyone in the vicinity. Everyone in the vicinity means militiamen, mostly drunk, and their naked girlfriends. After everyone is killed, says Old Billy, they should strike out for Ciudad Vargas and steal a ship so they can return to Port Royale.

More rules are added at this moment. Stealth and Courage are new attributes. Rules also cover time and movement, gunfire, reloading guns, throwing knives, and silent movement. Guns are pistols, muskets, and blunderbusses, and are one-shot affairs. To hit with a gun, a character must roll a number on 2d10 less than his "to hit" number for that weapon. Likewise, reloading, throwing, and silent movement require rolling less than their appropriate attribute. A special form of silent movement covers silent killing and whether or not the backstabbed victim makes a noise as he dies.

Book I closes with descriptions of the nearby buildings, and the characters can march off – free at last from rulebook restrictions – to pillage and fight as they please.

The second rulebook – *The Advanced Rules* – covers what items the GM should know before venturing to the fourth episode. The most noteworthy of these are:

*New Attributes:* On 2d10 – Constitution and Courage. From a table – Adrenaline (now separate from luck), Age, Physical Appearance, Swimming, and Drinking. Derived – Reading and Writing. Extras must also roll for personality traits in the categories of Greed, Cruelty, Morality, Courage (separate from the attribute), and Emotional Stability.

*Ability Checks:* Whenever a character wants to do something not covered in the rules – tree climbing, lock-picking – he must make a die roll against the attribute the GM declares governs that action. The GM may use the Everything Table to establish die roll modifiers depending on

whether the action is "very difficult," "slightly difficult," or any other qualifier on the table. The GM may also use the Everything Table to modify the die rolls to fire guns.

*Advanced Combat:* Fist fights remain the same, with new options of clubbing, grabbing, and hurting your hands. Sword fights become more complicated, with options for drawing and (involuntarily) dropping your weapon, breaking your sword, use of combat "patterns," and possible double attacks. Missile fire is completely redone, with a new Damage Table, special blunderbuss rules, and provisions for gun misfires and explosions.

*Damage:* Wounds, which couldn't be healed in the basic game, may now receive very limited care. Wounds caused by fist fights may heal normally. In addition, characters must make a saving roll versus constitution whenever wounded or suffer unconsciousness.

Other new rules cover swimming, drinking, losing stamina points outside of combat, using primitive grenades, falling down, horses and wagons, mass combat, experience points, gaining attribute points by taking classes, and picking up "girlfriends" back at Port Royale.

Book III – *The Adventures* – contains more episodes in this same adventure, and adds rules for quicksand, wet guns, simple cannon fire, and for extra pirate characters to go wild and loot everything in sight.

The new episodes cover a hacienda that should be destroyed, two villages, random and required encounters along the road, a swamp, two forts, and the port of Ciudad Vargas. Gamemaster and player maps are provided for the major locales.

So, that is ***Pirates and Plunder.***

Evaluation of the game highlights one of the strange things about it: As GM, I wasn't all that crazy about the game, but the players thought it was one of the better games they'd ever played.

Everyone agrees that the first two episodes are horrible. The players hated being "locked in" to a fist fight and swordfight without any choice, and the GM is obligated to read page after page of narrative out of the book. On top of that, three characters must go through *both* fights – and, considering that the fist fight is so unbalanced that player characters will almost certainly take actual wounds as well as stun points, the odds are that at least one player-character will die in the first two episodes. Even though the losses will only be "extra" characters, players may still be discouraged by the lack of balance in the opening episodes.

The only saving grace for those episodes is the NPCs presented – folks with names like Bloat, Sally (a man), Old Billy, and Hawksworth Fawlks – who are fleshed out in fine detail.

After that, the players have a great time. Combat rules are easily picked up and quickly become sacond nature. The game itself has a wonderful atmosphere: part historical, part Errol Flynn, and part tension (the players are, after all, stranded behind Spanish lines). Sneaking in the dark past guards, bursting in doors and loosing a fusilade of shots, swordfights in a rat-infested basement . . . it can be great fun for the players.

Fun for the players, at least. The GM will have trouble.

Yaquinto should first have found someone who knew how to edit rules, and then someone who knew how to lay out the rules into a printed page. I'm not saying these rules are as bad as ***Original D&D*** or anything like that. Rather, they are maddeningly elusive. It is possible to read an entire section without catching what it means, because rules are presented without coherent order, or are somehow hidden in the middle of some innocuous paragraph. Reading these rules made me begin to believe I was hallucinating – everything *seemed* to be organized, but I couldn't find what I wanted until I read that section two or three times. At least the index will help locate the general vicinity of most rules.

Then come the holes and mistakes. The grossest of these is the fact that the Basic Game says stamina is an Advanced Game attribute, the Advanced Game has nothing to say about stamina, and Episode One (the fist fight) *requires* stamina. Because of that, I bet more than one player is marking stun points from wounds rather than stamina.

Other holes deal with the adventures. The maps for Episodes Three and Four are wholly or partially unlabelled. In fact, the episodes themselves get sketchier as you go – dwindling from room-by-room descriptions and pre-rolled NPCs to building-by-building descriptions and categories of NPCs. Major gaps occur when players begin to capture ammunition. In Episode Three, for example, they can grab 26 full powder horns. Great! Now, how does that translate into shots for a musket, pistol, or blunderbuss? Can they make grenades with it, blow up buildings, or start fires?

The other problem is that the game does a lot of its simulating by throwing the job on the GM. Let's say that a pirate wants to pick the lock on a chest. The GM has to guess what attribute governs the action (agility? stealth?), then decide on the die roll modifier (difficult, -4? extremely difficult, -8?). Not only does this put pressure on the GM (as the players cry,"Make it a -6, OK?"), but it leaves die roll modifiers in a realm of how-the-GM-happens-to-feel-at-that-moment.

More complaints?

Some attributes are too powerful – agility can leave you open to constant fast attacks if you rolled bad, constitution may mean you faint every time you're hit, while wounds and stamina . . . well, bad rolls mean you die easily.

As for "extra" and NPC characters . . . according to the rules, they only take damage to wounds (total) and not to body areas. That means they can't be killed in the Basic Game, and makes them darn hard to wipe out in the Advanced Game. Besides, it means that player-characters are the only ones who can take a kick to the groin!

Combat also has some kinks. If your "to hit" number in a swordfight or a fist fight is higher than your opponent's, then that is a plus to your die roll (which means more damage). You have the advantage. Let's say the advantage works, and you put more hits on your opponent than he does on you. Damage reduces *all* attributes, including "to hit" numbers, and if you are hurting him worse than he is you, then the margin between "to hit" numbers (the die roll modifier!) is steadily increasing. In other words, the guy on top tends to stay on top . . . and, in fact, will have a good chance of crippling an opponent if the margin widens far enough.

One last complaint: advertising fraud! The box invites us all to "Hoist the Jolly Roger and set sail with the morning tide. The whole of the Caribbean waits to be pillaged and looted . . ." Actually, the present rules cover only the episodes already described – land expeditions. *Naval rules and episodes are not covered.* Isn't that deceitful, Yaquinto?

Summing up, ***Pirates and Plunder*** is a mixed bag. I'm really not all that fond of it, speaking as the gamemaster who had to fight his way through the rules. It's certainly not "state of the art." Yet those that did the playing loved the game, ranking it up there with D&D and TFT (to my amazement). In fact, they are looking ahead eagerly for the promised high-seas episode pack.

I suppose that makes it a game players will enjoy, *if* they can convince some poor soul to GM it for them.

***Pirates and Plunder** is designed by Michael S. Matheny and published by Yaquinto. It retails for $19 and contains three rulebooks, character sheet pad, seven game aids, and two uninked (Gamescience) dice, boxed.*

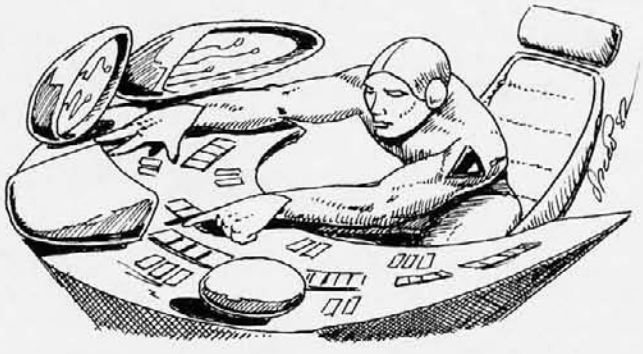
# WHERE WE'RE GOING

It's celebration time. At long last, we have gotten *The Space Gamer* back onto glossy paper . . . and the better, cleaner printing that goes with it. We'll also be able to have more color on the interior pages. We hope you like the way the new TSG looks.

The new format will also allow us to print photographs inside the magazines with no risk of smearing or fuzziness. Thus, we'll be able to include pictures of designers, box covers, convention scenes, etc. All in all, we think it's a big improvement.

The increased cover price is the worm in the apple (though we would have had to go to $3.00 in a few months anyway). Subscription rates will stay the same for now. When we have to raise them, there will be enough advance warning to allow resubscriptions at the current rate.

Please send us your comments on the new format, and your suggestions as to how we can best use it to improve TSG still more.



## NEXT ISSUE

***I've had it. No more promises. If you get anything at all in next month's TSG, it'll be by sheer luck.***

***But if you do get an issue, it may include:***

***"Westway," a British campaign setting for CAR WARS;***

***"The Great Buffalo Hunt," a comparison/contrast featured review of CATACOMBS OF CHAOS and HEROIC FANTASY;***

***"Submitting Your Game Design" (What? But that trick never works!);***

***Treacherous PBM fiction from the man who brought you "A Super Named John";***

***And a twit, an angel, and a blivit. Good luck.***

### Where "Where We're Going" is Going

You probably noticed that this column isn't in its accustomed place on page 2. There's a good reason for that. Although SJ Games owns TSG (as well as *Fire & Movement*), neither magazine is a "house organ." But I use this column to talk about the magazine itself, upcoming SJ Games products, the state of the game industry, and anything else that crosses my mind . . . so "Where We're Going" *is* sort of a house-organ column within the magazine. And it's *not* the most important thing in TSG. So WWG is being moved farther back into the magazine, to leave the opening pages free for feature articles.

### And, Speaking of House News . . .

Several new products are under way around here. ***Truck Stop*** will add 18-wheelers to ***Car Wars***; several other ***Car Wars*** supplements are in the planning stages. ***Iron Men*** (or ***Ironmen*** or ***IronMen*** or something like that) is an ***Ogre***-universe game I've been talking about for years, in which each counter will represent a single infantryman in powered armor. It will not be "compatible" with ***Ogre*** or ***G.E.V.***, since the scale will be different . . . but ***Iron Men*** could be used to play out what happens within a single hex in ***G.E.V.*** when opposing infantrymen meet. It will appear in the January TSG, and will probably be released later (in expanded form) in a Pocket Box version.

We are also, at long last, beginning to work on a new RPG system. It's too early to say much about it; for one thing, we don't even have a name picked out. For another thing, the market is clogged with role-playing systems right now. I don't want to spend a lot of time and money publishing "just another RPG." I have some ideas I *think* will turn into the first true third-generation role-playing game. If a couple of months of paytesting bear that out . . . great! If not . . . forget it. I refuse to publish a mediocre game, or even a good one that contributes nothing new. We'll see.

We've also added a new member to the

TSG team: Pat Mueller (formerly assistant editor of Flying Buffalo's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*). Pat has been guilty of a couple of mailer cartoons already, and will probably be supplying more as time goes on; her "regular" duties will include typesetting and graphics.

### GenCon Report

Last month's Origins report passed over TSR lightly, with the comment that, since they had not come to Origins, their GenCon releases would have a lot to say about their progress. Well, we went to GenCon – our first time there – and things were very interesting indeed.

In the first place, TSR did indeed have several new releases. Of greatest interest to TSG readers are ***Star Frontiers,*** their new SFRPG, and ***Gangbusters,*** a role-playing game set in the Prohibition era. I can't offer a true review, but the physical quality of both games seems high, and I saw several groups playing (and evidently enjoying) ***Gangbusters.*** Also being demonstrated was Mattel's new ***D&D*** computer game, which will no doubt bring more megabucks into the Mattel and TSR coffers.

The convention itself seemed well-organized. For the most part, it was more bureaucratic (but, therefore, better structured) than Origins. The number of cancelled events seemed comparable, and the general mood of the participants similar. The crowd was noticeably younger, but enough of us releatively ancient sorts were there to allow, for instance, several tables of Napoleonics. Fantasy dominated, but did not monopolize, the weekend.

Two events marred the con for us. One came on the second day, when our booth was visited by a committee of two TSR "executives" (who turned out to be a janitor and the son of one of the stockholders). They informed us that ***Killer*** would have to be removed from the table immediately, as it was on a "banned" list. An "industry ethics code" being promulgated by TSR was also mentioned, though not defined. We've been promised a fuller explanation from responsible persons at TSR; we're waiting.

The second (and far more serious) event was the release of issue no. 65 of TSR's *Dragon* magazine, featuring a three-page editorial by TSR founder E. Gary Gygax. Among other things, the editorial defined Origins as a conspiracy to destroy GenCon, and encouraged readers not to go to both conventions, as the Game Manufacturers' Association (which sponsors Origins) did not support GenCon! This came as quite a shock to the many GAMA members, including myself, who had booths, tourneys, and other events there. The fact that TSR owns GenCon lock, stock, and barrel doesn't have to detract from its importance to the hobby – *as long as other companies are still welcome there and are treated fairly!* That editorial was a shock; let's hope that it doesn't become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### More About Origins

Last month's column mentioned that Avalon Hill hadn't introduced anything earthshaking. I forgot that not all of TSG's readers are strictly science fiction and fantasy fans! AH *did* release ***GI: Anvil of Victory,*** which drew tremendous kudos from the historical gamers at Origins.

More embarrassingly, the Mayfair report contained an error of fact. Mayfair had two new fantasy releases at Origins: ***The Nanorian Stones*** and ***Beastmaster Mountain,*** both generalized FRPG supplements. Keep reading; I'll get it all right someday.

*–Steve Jackson*

# GAME MASTER

*GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.*

---

### One-Page Bulge

1. Does one have to stop moving if one's unit moves into the zone of control of an enemy unit even if a river is between the two of them?

2. If one decides to attack across a river, does one have to attack every adjacent enemy unit or only one – like the "town" rule?

Herbert Gratz

*1. Zones of control* are *considered to extend across rivers; therefore, your unit has to stop moving when it enters the adjacent hex, even though the river is there.*

*2. As per 8.1, a unit does not have to attack an adjacent enemy across a river. Therefore, if you decide to attack one unit, you do not have to attack others.*

*Steve Jackson*

### Star Smuggler

*Heritage has provided us with errata for the* ***Star Smuggler*** *base prices.*

Due to an unfortunate error, "base price amount" appeared after many paragraph titles, instead of the actual base price value. If you have a first printing booklet that omits these values, please note them in your rules booklet:

r318 – Base Price 20 S.
r319 – Base price 25 S.
r320 – Base Price 30 S.
r321 – Base Price 40 S.
r330 – Base Price 25 S.
r331 – Base Price 50 S.
r332 – Base Price 100 S.
r333 – Base Price 2d6 x 100 S.
r334 – Base Price 50 S.
r335 – Base Price 100 S.
r336 – Base Price 100 S.
r337 – Base Price 100 S.
r338 – Base Price 50 S.
r339 – Base Price 100 S.

In paragraph r333, dice roll 4, the base price results quoted in there should be multiplied by ten (additional die roll of 4 means 1,000 S, 5 means 2,000 S, and 6 means 10,000 S).

*–Arnold Hendrick*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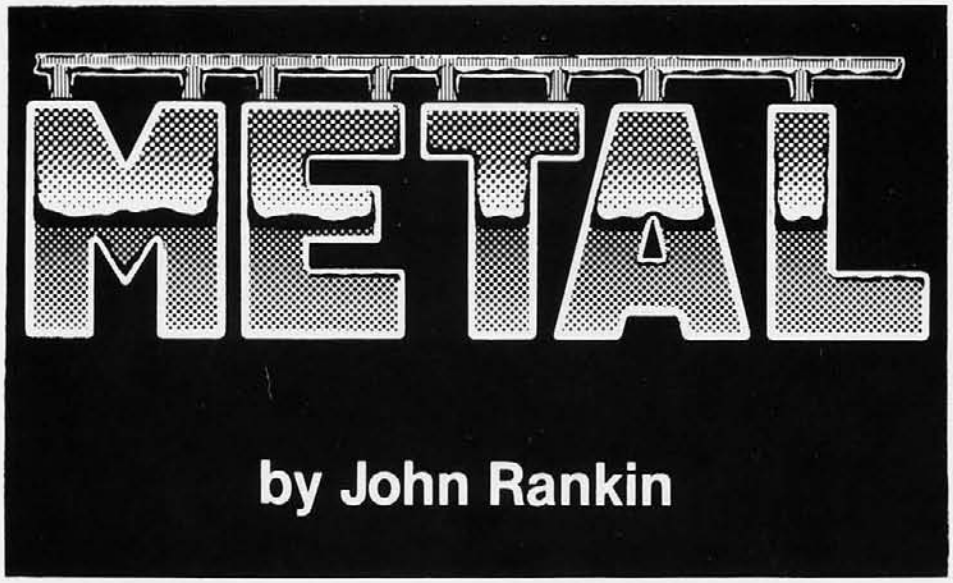


**Cruising for Toys at Origins**

A show the size of Origins is often overwhelming; it's difficult to notice specific trends until one gets home and sifts through all the mental impressions, catalogues, press releases, and vast quantities of loot picked up.

There was no such problem in '82, though. I *knew*, even as I collected review samples and talked to folks at the various companies, that the miniatures industry is not just healthy . . . it's thriving. There were tons of new releases of every variety (which one expects at Origins). But even more impressive was the *quality* of both design and casting. Amazing standards of excellence are being reached virtually industry-wide. Herewith is a cursory (and by no means complete) glance at some of the new toys. If something catches your interest, please write the manufacturer for a catalogue. Most miniatures companies do a lot of direct-mail sales, and since most shops can't begin to carry all the different lines, this is often the best way to get exactly what you want. (Tell them you saw it in *Metal.* All those companies that supply me with review figures need to be reminded now and again that doing so is indeed a sound investment.)

*Asgard* – available from the Armory, 4145 Amos Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21215. This extensive English line of 25 mm fantasy and 25 and 15 mm science fiction figures has never enjoyed proper distribution in the U.S. With the Armory handling sales, that should change. Fantasy figures are large, extremely well-detailed, and loaded down with all sorts of dungeoneering equipment (including optional weapons, shields, etc.). Well worth a look.

*Castle Creations* – 1322 Cranwood Square South, Columbus, OH 43229. This relatively new company offers 25 mm fantasy, superhero, soldier of fortune, and spy types. The sculpting often shows considerably more enthusiasm than skill, but balancing this is an extremely wide selection (55 comic hero types alone), a 20% discount on orders over $40.00, and a number of unique figures (Afro-American spies!) available from no other company.

*Citadel Miniatures UK* – P.O. Box 12352, Cincinnati, OH 45212. These figures from Merry Ol' England are being cast and distributed in America by Ral Partha, with the fine quality control that company is famous for. Origins provided my first opportunity to examine this line in depth, and I came away mightily impressed. The new releases feature state-of-the art sculpting (even the skeleton warriors have personalities) and are highly compatible with Ral Partha figures. A well-illustrated catalogue detailing this vast line is available for $2.00. It's worth every penny. Highly recommended!

*FASA* – P.O. Box 6930, Chicago, IL 60680. FASA enters the miniatures field – sort of – with ***Grav-Ball.*** Something akin to *Rollerball* in free-fall, this boxed game features 15 mm player figures by Martian Metals. Look for a review of this game in TSG soon.

*Fineous Phigures* – P.O. Box 12291, Norwood, OH 45212. That's right, Fineous freaks, Mr. Fingers and his pals Rupert the Ranger, Boredflak the Wizard, Grond the Anti-Paladin, the evil wizard Kask, Fred, Charlie, and Mergatroid are available for ten bucks a set. Sculpted by the ubiquitous Tom Meier, these figures approach absolute perfection in capturing the essence of these comic characters. If you're a Fineous fan, your life will be empty until you own a set of these. What more can I say?

*Heritage U.S.A.* – 14001 Distribution Way, Dallas, TX 75243. The million or so of you out there playing ***Champions*** will be interested to know that the first five figures (all super-villains) of the licensed line are now available. Sculpting and casting are superb. With this sort of quality approach, and the popularity of ***Champions,*** Heritage appears to have a *big* winner. Look for the modular hero figures to follow soon.

*Steve Jackson Games* – P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Yes, we *finally* debuted the ***Autoduel*** miniatures for ***Car Wars.*** Packs now available include Vans and Luxury Cars; Pickups, Mid-Sized Cars, Compacts and Subcompacts, Station Wagons, Cycles, and Sidecars and Turrets will follow soon. Scale on these models is 1/180, which makes them quite compatible with N-scale model train accessories. Such items as cars, trucks, busses, construction equipment, cops, and ambulances (often pre-painted) are available at any hobby shop specializing in model railroading.

*Ral Partha* – 5938 Carthage Court, Cincinnati, OH 45212. The limited edition ***Imperial Dragon*** was the most impressive hunk of cast metal at Origins. With this piece sporting a $50 price tag, I doubt many will buy it purely for use in a game. For those of you who might purchase such an object either as an investment or as a work of art, I have a suggestion. Instead of painting, give the dragon a rub-on pewter finish using *Pewter Patina* by Woodland Scenics. It's available at the aforementioned model railroading hobby shops.

*Saxon* – P.O. Box 121, Rockville, MD 20850. Saxon's figure designer, Conan Scanlon, is one of the most talented new sculptors in the business. I was pleased to find out that his abilities also extend to painting said figures, and that Saxon intends to market these collector-quality pieces. I particularly remember a large, beautifully dry-brushed dragon on sale for 35 dollars. Having been in this particular business, I can tell you it was an excellent buy. Write for more info.

*Superior* – Box 99, Claymont, DE 19703. ***Wizards & Lizards*** is an absolutely incredible 25 mm fantasy line. Sculpted by designers of large-scale collector figures like Ray Lamb, these are some of the most life-like, detailed, and at the same time, paintable miniatures on the market. They're expensive (high grade metal and first-class quality control are ample compensation), they're somewhat hard to find, and the line expands slowly. But they are worth it. Only a few new releases were evident at Origins, and these were mostly larger figures like a Genie and an

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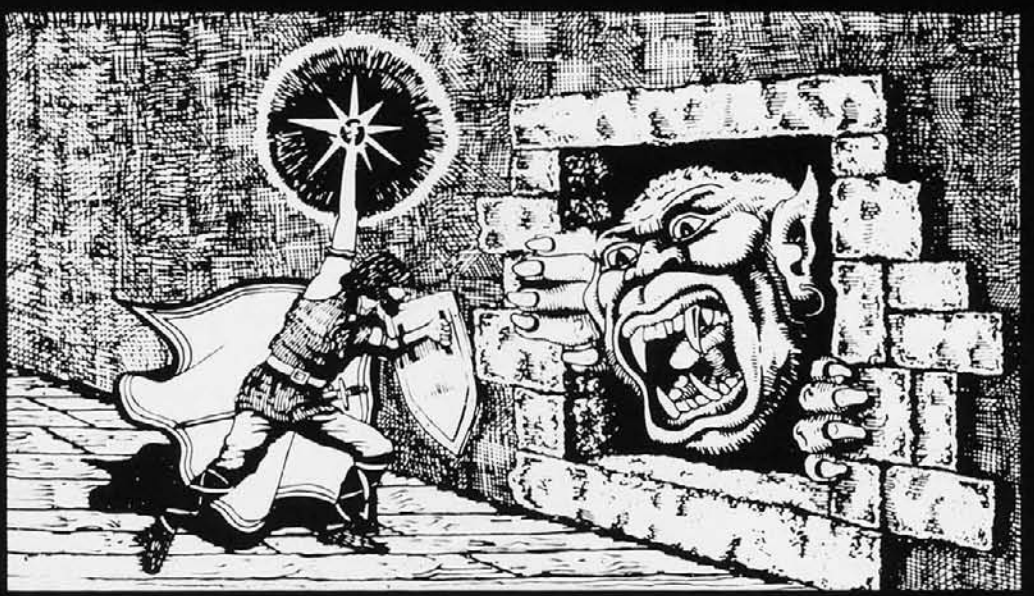

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Ogre. As more gamers and collectors become familiar with this line, it will undoubtedly grow much faster due to its increased popularity. In the meantime, there are plenty of these remarkable figures to get started on. I urge you to have a look. You won't be disappointed.

*Task Force Games* – 1110 North Filmore, Amarillo, TX 79107. Another relative newcomer to the miniatures field, Task Force has made a huge splash with its ***Star Fleet Battles*** spaceships. Additions to the line included the Klingon Dreadnought and Battle Cruiser, a redesigned Romulan Warbird, Tholian Dreadnought and Patrol Cruiser, and the Kzinti Strike Cruiser. Also on display were a set of four 25 mm Swashbuckler figures by TFG's sculptor Richard Kerr. These were a big hit among the swashbuckling crowd here at the office, and more should be forthcoming if these prove popular.

### A Trip to Mars

When this company profile started taking shape, the urge was strong to do "a proper send-up." Considering the Martians' weird public image, it would have been easy to fob off a few bizarre tales on an unsuspecting public. Their earthbase, located 45 miles from SJ Games, does have a room full of pet tarantulas. But those of you who tuned in expecting to find Martian Metals owned by the Master Cylinder will have to be disappointed.

Actually, Forest and wife Carol (who manages the money side of things) are very nice, normal people . . . kids, animals, house in the suburbs. I know that's at odds with what one might surmise after reading their ads (which, by the way, were originally conceived with the help of an individual whose initials are SJ), and the dichotomy extends to the company itself. Martian Metals is a successful little company, and yet there's not any one aspect of its operation that jumps out at you (other than the aforementioned ad campaign). Head designer Scott Penn (aided by Mary Peralta) is not exactly a household name in the industry, and yet the Martians won the H.G. Wells Award for Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Figure Line at Origins '82 against some very stiff competition with their ***Traveller-Dragonslayers*** 15 mm lines.

Forest has a lucrative license with GDW for ***Traveller,*** and yet one of his own lines, ***Dragonslayers*** provides one of the most interesting licensing stories I've heard. You might recall that there was a movie of the same name a while back. It seems Paramount was only weeks away from releasing the film when they found out Martian had an ironclad trademark on the name. Hasty negotiations brought about a lucrative settlement for Forest and company, and the movie was duly released. Score one for the good guys.

Now, to update the story: Forest was recently negotiating with Paramount to do a line of ***Star Trek*** figures. Things were going fine until a member of Paramount's legal department saw the Martian name. Bells rang, negotiations became decidedly unfriendly, and the licensing fee suddenly skyrocketed. Don't look for ***Star Trek*** figures from Mars (word is Grenadier got the license). But at least Forest has the memory of sticking it to one of the big guys, and if rumors are to be believed, 50 grand in the bank.

Quality control is another area where MM has received little attention, and yet their standards are right up there with just about any company that comes to mind. Laid back, for the most part, describes the work atmosphere on Mars (Forest is gone a lot), but mold cutter Jim Zepeda and production chief Butch "Leadsmith" Leeper keep things running nicely. The relaxed working conditions do mean the figures get inspected properly, and that, my friends, is what quality control is all about.

So what's new on Mars? The ***Traveller*** line is being constantly expanded and will soon include spaceships in both 1/1200 and 1/2400 scales. The big news, though, is the new 15 mm armor series (perfect for ***Striker***) by T-Rex designer Ab Mobasher. Those of you familiar with the T-Rex line (which is now being manufactured and distributed by MM) know the fine detail Ab puts in his work; these vehicles are by far his best effort to date. Look for them if you do 15 mm science fiction battles. They're absolutely superb.

In other areas: MM is doing figures for inclusion in FASA's new boxed games ***Grav-Ball*** and ***Troll Ball.*** Last but not least, 25 mm ***RuneQuest*** figures are finally available! Four packs are out, with eight more to follow soon. They are *very* nice figures . . . ***RuneQuest*** aficionados will not be disappointed.

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# UNNIGHT

A *Space Opera* World-Setting
by Stefan Jones
Special thanks to Jeff Jacobson,
William A. Barton, and Chris Smith
Playtesters and Technical Assistants:
Norman Banduch, Kelly Grimes, Rob Kirk,
Andy McWilliam, Jim Norman, and Ed Villareal
Map graphics by Elisabeth Zakes

***Unnight*** is a prepared world-setting for ***Space Opera.*** Details of the world of Unnight, its peoples and societies, its creatures, its satellites, and suggestions for appropriate adventures are included. The Unnight system is located in the Outworlds sector; the FGU star-sector atlas of that name is helpful, but not necessary for play. With a little modification of planetary data and creature and character statistics, Unnight can be easily used as a setting for other role-playing games of a science-fiction or superhero nature.


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**I. Introduction**

Unnight is the planet of a M0 star in the Outworlds sector. It is one of the many worlds which were settled in the great wave of exploration and conquest begun in the first century interstellar. As with many of these early colonies, technical civilization fell, sending the inhabitants into a dark age. At present, Unnight is undergoing a rapid and rocky reintroduction to interstellar society. Great opportunity exists for those who seek power and wealth; people who have sworn to protect others from exploitation will find that they are needed here, also.

NPCs and situations provided will sometimes be given in vague form; this is to allow the SM to tailor the situation to his or her own play-style and the strength of the PCs.

**II. The Unnight/Orb Planetary System**

Unnight is the larger member of a binary pair. The other world is Orb, an icy, quite low-density planet with a thin atmosphere and low gravity. The two orbit about a barycenter within Unnight; total distance between the two is about 1.055 light-seconds. The two worlds are face-locked, which prevents the nasty problem of huge tides sweeping across the globes. The "orbital" period

about the barycenter is 480 hours, about 20 Terran days. The two worlds' orbit about the sun (an MO class dwarf) takes only five days, or 2,400 hours.

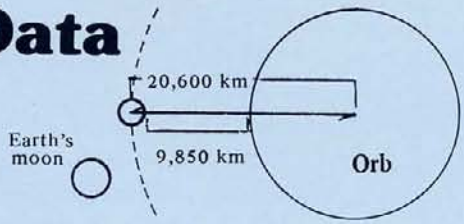
Because of the face-locked attitude of Unnight, each hemisphere is lit by the sun for about 240 hours a "day." The planet's thick atmosphere and large oceans help to even out the drastic temperature changes that would normally result, but even so, one can expect snowfall at night and 30°C+ temperatures in the day. The reflected light from Orb provides a very adequate source of illumination (45 times the light provided by Terra's full moon) to the facing side of Unnight.

Overall climate on Unnight is on the chilly side. The ice caps are large; they extend, on an average, to the fourth line of hexes from poles on the map. (When land masses are near the poles, they can extend out to the fifth and sixth hexes, but when large ocean masses front the poles, the ice caps only extend to the second or third hexes.) Only the temperate and equatorial zones are comfortable to humans.

The stability of the binary system is anomalously high. Some planetologists have suggested that Unnight was terraformed by an advanced civilization, or even that the world was placed into its current relationship with Orb for some unknown purpose. More information on Unnight's astronomical data and climate appear in the boxes on pages 19 and 22.

# Astronomic Data

The Unnight/Orb planetary system, within the Stuzak solar system, is peculiar and has caused some speculation among interested astronomers. The two planets revolve around one another, around a barycenter within the surface of Unnight, in a relationship similar to that of Earth to Earth's moon. In addition, a small moon (unfortunately named Orbette by an unduly schmaltzy original colonist) rotates around Orb. The diagram to the right suggests the view of Orb and Orbette as seen from Unnight; a diagram, to scale, of Earth's moon shows the difference in the size of the bodies as seen.




An aesthetic oddity of the system is that an advantageously positioned viewer on Unnight's surface at night would see Orb rise at disk in the phase of the new moon, wax steadily to full moon at "midnight," 120 hours later, and then wane back to new-moon status by dawn, another 120 hours later. (However, as the Unnight night is 240 hours long and temperatures drop into the profanely uncomfortable, Unnight's young lovers don't tend to marvel at this.) In addition, Orbette, revolving around Orb in an orbit perpendicular to a center-to-center line from Unnight to Orb (and thus visible all hours of the night), mirrors Orb's phases during the course of the orbit. Orbette's orbital period is 240 hours; thus, once per night, Orbette travels around Orb as a mirror of the secondary planet's lunar phase.

Astronomers have computed the mass of Orb and Orbette and can conclude only that the system is the result of some powerful planetary engineers or the result of an extremely unlikely natural development. Orb and Orbette are likely to be hollow; if they are, they are composed of a very strong material (such as core iron); else they would have broken up ages ago. The planetary system is strangely stable, and Unnight/Orb orbits well within the former diameter of the sun – the diameter before it collapsed into its current dwarf stage.

The face-locked attitude of the two worlds diminishes the effect of tidal forces, but their proximity to the sun means that there are still tides.

Data on the mass, diameter, and orbital periods of the three bodies appear at bottom.

Eclipses occur twice an Unnight "year," or once every 1200 hours (2½ "days"). Therefore, there will be one daytime eclipse and one nighttime eclipse per 5-day year.

More data appear on the planetary map information sheet on page 22.

**Planetary Bodies Data**

| | Unnight | Orb | Orbette |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mass (in kg) | $6x10^{24}$ | $6x10^{22}$ | $6x10^{20}$ |
| Diameter (in km) | 13,000 | 19,000 | 2,500 |
| Orbital Period (in hrs) | 2400 | 480 | 240 |
| Surface | 1 G | $2.24x10^{-3}$ | $6.59x10^{-5}$ |

# Meteorologic Data

Unnight is a chilly world compared to Earth; the only relatively comfortable areas are within the equatorial regions.

On the chart below, the zones mentioned work this way in relationship to the planetary maps: The polar zones are approximately two hexes wide, and cold temperate zones are two hexes wide, the warm temperate zones are three hexes wide, and the equatorial region is five hexes wide. The chart below gives the normal temperature range in terms of season, planetary region, and whether it's noon or midnight. Naturally, there will be a gradual heating trend from midnight to noon and a gradual cooling trend from noon to midnight, so the SM can improvise any temperature of the day from these parameters. These are only normal temperatures; the SM can provide for especially harsh or mild seasons as he pleases.

The oceans have a moderating effect on temperature extremes. Within 500 km of the ocean, average the temperature listed above with 12°.

As for rainfall or other precipitation: The base chance for precipitation during a summer or winter day is 15%. Modifiers: Within 500 km of the coast, +5%. In a large forest area, +3%. In the mountains, +5%. At night, +5%. In the spring, +10%. In the fall, -5%. The unvarying chance, regardless of season, for precipitation in a desert or polar region is 1%.

Another phenomenon of note: A full solar eclipse occurs at high noon of every Unnight day. The overall eclipse (partial plus full) lasts 6.6 minutes; the full eclipse lasts 4.2 minutes. (These times are somewhat shorter the further away from the equator you are, and at the poles only partial eclipses occur.) A lunar eclipse of comparable length happens every Unnight night at midnight.

| | Spring | | Summer | | Fall | | Winter | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *day* | *ngt* | *day* | *ngt* | *day* | *ngt* | *day* | *ngt* | *day* | *ngt* |
| 1: polar North | -25 | -40 | -12 | -20 | +12 | -16 | - 4 | -26 | -12 | -48 |
| 2: cold temper. | -12 | -25 | 0 | -11 | +21 | - 1 | +13 | - 6 | + 8 | -18 |
| 3: warm temper. | +16 | + 1 | +20 | + 6 | +26 | + 7 | +22 | + 5 | +20 | 0 |
| 4: equatorial | +30 | +15 | +30 | +15 | +30 | +15 | +30 | +15 | +30 | +15 |
| 5: warm temper. | + 7 | +22 | + 5 | +20 | 0 | +16 | + 1 | +20 | + 6 | +26 |
| 6: cold temper. | - 1 | +13 | - 6 | + 8 | -18 | -12 | -25 | 0 | -11 | +21 |
| 7: polar South | -16 | - 4 | -26 | -12 | -48 | -25 | -40 | -12 | -20 | +12 |
| | **Fall** | | **Winter** | | **Spring** | | **Summer** | | | |

### III. History of the Unnight Colony

Unnight was settled in the first century I.E. by a Terran colonization group from a cooperative of Third-World nations. The ships, leased from an early trading company, left the half-million settlers in two groups on the new world, then headed for home. In the confusion of these decades, no follow-up visits were made. At first, this did not bother the colonists; they had plenty of equipment and all the wonders of 22nd-century Terran technology to help them. The gene-tailored crops were planted and prefab cities grew like weeds. At the end of the first Unnight-year, everything looked rosy.

Then disaster struck. The colonists' buildings were constructed of a fiber grown from gene-tailored microbes, a material which was cheap, plentiful, and versatile. Unfortunately, it was of a chemical base similar to that of Unnight's life forms, and the local microbes literally ate the stuff. During a spectacular eclipse of Orb, the colonists' buildings began to fall apart.

Within hours, the first colonization group was in big trouble. Plumbing, houses, important installations and the warehouses turned into piles of goo. The second group was warned, but before it could find a way to stop the destruction, the power generation facilities were gone.

As if to add insult to injury, the planet had been treating the colonists to a harsh year of rains and wind. Within days, the crops were ruined. A few resourceful individuals headed for the hills to hunt; some stayed in the landing-spot settlements to scrape through the year.

In ten years, the surviving colonists had learned to live off the native wildlife and wide forests. Towns of stone and wood appeared as the widely-spread refugees of disaster settled down to farm or hunt.

In a hundred years, the settlers formed nations. As nations always do, they fought over property and prestige. Technology was then low tech-two: swords and spears and primitive bows. Metals were scarce, especially those denser than iron, which made mines another object of wars.

Three hundred years after the great crash, a new force came to light: a wandering class of merchant/scholars who called themselves "Wizards." Everybody else called them Wizards, too. After all, they could throw balls of fire, cure diseases, summon demons, and kill their enemies with invisible forces! The Wizards became an important tool for the leaders of the kingdoms of Unnight; with a few hired Wizards, a battle could be won against amazing odds.

When Unnight was rediscovered by a Midgard survey cruiser some 50 years ago, the settled regions of Unnight were divided among eight kingdoms. The Wizards had set up permanent schools and were busily expanding their power at the expense of superstitious commoners and greedy nobles. Technology had advanced to level three, with gunpowder known only to the Wizards, who used it to throw fireballs and launch rockets.

The Ardecco province of Midgard was given the task of contacting the people of Unnight. The Ardeccans chose to use the Wizards as a tool to spread off-world knowledge. The Wizards, pragmatic opportunists all, gratefully accepted the job, and are now telling tales of how they convinced a race of off-world demons to serve them.

At the time of the PCs' adventures, the Ardeccans' plans are proceeding smoothly. The commoners are starting to receive education and the fields are being sown in more efficient ways. Politically, things are not as hopeful: The eight nations are taking advantage of off-world knowledge to make their wars more widespread and frequent. There are rumors that other Midgard provinces are trying to muscle in on the Ardeccans' monopoly on native artwork and cultural items. Mercenaries who agree to use low-tech weapons are allowed to work on Unnight, provided that they work for the Wizards' Guild or their allies.

**IV. Maps and Notes**

The planetary map (page 22) is on a 1,375 km = 1 hex. The crosses are towns of slightly less than 10,000 people. There are hundreds of much smaller towns scattered about in the settled regions; for purposes of clarity, these are not shown.

The political map (page 23) shows the approximate borders of the eight nations. There are no set boundaries; as the local nobles are continually fighting for new territory, the borders tend to change regularly.

**V. Nations and Peoples of Unnight**

*Xinguth* is on the western limb of the Crassant continent. The land is mountainous and not very arable, resulting in a hunting- and herding-based agricultural system. The storms caused by the falling temperatures during the night are particularly fierce in Xinguth, due to its location between two major oceans.

The government of Xinguth is an unpleasantly harsh council of clan heads. The government uses its large army to keep the lesser clans in line and to patrol the borders. The Wizards of Xinguth are particularly corrupt and worldly, but make an effort to avoid overly improper acts that might upset the Guild.

Xinguth's population is two million, too large for the poor land and small fishing fleet to properly feed. The capital is Bazilnio, a closed city with a major trading port and a very crude starport that the Xinguthites hope will attract off-world trade.

Xinguth faces away from Orb.

*Iquazor* is a very loose confederation of villages held together by a common church bureaucracy. The "nobles" of Iquazor are all clergymen or women in a church descended from Terra's Roman Catholicism.

The land is very fertile here, providing the Iquazor with the source of trade income from Xinguth. There are numerous fishing villages along the Far Ocean coast, which provide another source of food and income.

Iquazor has a very small, mostly ceremonial army. The clergy is not interested in expanding its territory or even fighting one another. The Wizards are not an important force in Iquazor, as they consider the underpopulated nation too weak to bother with.

As with Xinguth, Iquazor commands no view of Orb.

*Irwundanch* lies on the southern shores of the Dawn-to-Dark Ocean, on a narrow strip of land between the sea and the Ghatost mountains. The major sources of income are fishing and hunting.

Irwundanch is ruled by the Khamis family and its noble followers. There is no capital city, or even regional capitals. The fall of civilization made the Irwunders a wandering people, and the tradition lives on in the government. The rulers of a region ride about in large caravans, touring their territory and stopping at towns to settle local disputes. Every five years, the caravans meet, and a grand council/fair is held to solve any pressing problems and to celebrate.

In time of war, the landowners arm themselves and are led by the forces of the "local" noble's caravan guard. Irwundanch fights occasional skirmishes with Xinguth over islands in the Dawn-to-Dark Ocean and the mountainous terrain between the two nations. The Wizards in Irwundanch are very Guild-loyal and help the nobles preserve the status-quo between the nations.

Irwundanch does command a view of Orb – the further east, the better.

*Byilikin* is on the little-explored continent of Carkip. Most of the population lives on the coast, where fishing provides the country's major source of food and trade. The outback country is sparsely settled, and the coastal people consider its folk backward and uncouth.

Byilikin is ruled by a king and a council of village mayor/nobles. Inland regions are occasionally run by outcast coastal nobles or, more often, by petty military officers. The government is based from forts and enforced by royal troops.

There are about half a million people in Byilikin. The standard of living is among the highest on the planet and is improving due to the intervention of the Wizards, who maintain a strong presence in the country.

Byilikin is in the Orb-force horizon zone, and so affords a poor view of the sister planet.

*Gamotch* is a large, flat country on the western shore of the Incald Ocean. The land is fertile, and even the desert regions have proved fruitful.

The country is governed by warlords. The head warlord acts as king and commands the navy. The military rule is harsh, but is supported by the enthusiasm of the people. The Wizards act as a moderating influence, which is much needed, as the individual warlords still fight over territory and make raids on each other and on other nations.

The military is large and well-equipped. Gamotch is currently at war with Loosyick over the rich, well-watered lands between the two countries.

Visitors are advised to exercise caution when traveling in Gamotch; offworlders are held in deep suspicion or outright hatred, and kidnappings and lynchings are not unknown.

Gamotch faces Orb.

*Loosyick* is a harsh land north of Gamotch. Much of the territory is mountainous or cold desert. The stormy seas of the north Incald Ocean make fishing a marginal source of food.

Like Irwundanch, the nobles of Loosyick travel about the lands in caravans. Unlike the Irwundans, the Loosyick nobles do this to tax and otherwise oppress the peasantry. The head of the country is a hereditary monarch who lives in a mountaintop fortress/palace called "The Scarps."

Due to the poor land and little mineral wealth, Loosyick cannot afford a large army. The Wizards greatly supplement the forces that do exist, as a weak Loosyick would invite invasion by Gamotch.

Loosyick also faces Orb.

*Mensod* is located on the eastern shore of the Dawn-to-Dark Ocean. Its fertile land and abundant mineral wealth make Mensod one of the richest nations on Unnight. A good portion of the country is forested.

Mensod is ruled by a monarch and feudal lords. Fortunately for the commoners, the king and nobles are enlightened rulers and are concerned with the welfare of their people. The army and navy are very small – too small, in fact, to effectively protect Mensod from raids and invasions. As in Loosyick, the Wizards have intervened to preserve the status-quo.

The king's palace is located in the bustling port city of Meddyfice. The primary starport of Unnight is also located near Meddyfice, and the Wizards' Guild's nominal headquarters is in the vicinity.

Mensod commands the best view of Orb of all the planet's nations.

*Kiroon* is located north of Mensod. The ocean currents make the weather warm but rainy, a boon for the farmers on the rich coastal regions. There are numerous ports on the ocean, and fishing and shipping have become major industries.

Kiroon is ruled by the Tyrant of Tyrnington, an absolute ruler chosen by force and contest from the army. The aristocracy in Kiroon consists of rich merchants and landowners who try to curry favor from the Tyrant. The commoners are generally poor and illiterate, but enthusiastic about their country and its wealth.

The country's army and navy are large, but the Wizards do not give any support to Kiroon, as they believe the country is not keeping up with their goals. Despite this, Kiroon is waging an economic cold war with Mensod.

Visitors are welcome in Kiroon, and the picturesque capital city of Tyrnington is an excellent trading center. Mercenaries are warned by the Wizards' Guild to seek employment elsewhere.

Kiroon is also illuminated by Orb at night.

*Races:* The settlers of Unnight came from a wide variety of backgrounds on Terra. Virtually all were from the "Third World" nations, particularly those in South America and Africa. Because there was little chance for the various colony groups to meet, trade, or intermix during the long period of chaos after the collapse, distinct racial types still appear. Xinguth and Iquazor are both populated by folk descended from Latin-American countries, and have cultures similar to those of that Terran region. Irwundanch was settled by people of Mongolian-Asian descent, while the remaining countries have peoples of African ancestry. Offworlders will be easily recognized as such, unless a specific offworlder if one of those racial stocks and has heavily studied Unnight culture and dialect. Student of the appropriate Terran languages will be able to communicate with Unnight natives, if somewhat clumsily.

Basic economic data is presented in the box on this page.

**VI. The Wizards**

One of the most unique aspects of Unnight's society is the existence of the Wizards. These scholar/scientist/showmen are not really sorcerers, of course, but they do their best to keep the common folk and greedy nobles convinced that they are.

Actually, the Wizards are the descend-

# Economic Data

Unnight's peoples, existing as they do in a very feudalistic society, have not developed very sophisticated rates of exchange or economy mechanics.

In fact, the primary mode of exchange is (naturally enough) still the barter system. Regional lords take their tithes and taxes in livestock and goods. Major cities do have a monetary system; the dominant coin is the *plata,* a silver coin. The rough exchange rate of the *plata* is one such coin per fifteen credits; thus, especially to the Unnight peasant, possession of such a coin would be a godsend. *Platitas* are worth a tenth of the major coin, and a *cente* is one one-hundredth of a *platita.*

Coin money is not commonly found outside major cities, and actual credits are not used for exchange except in Meddyfice, location of the planet's starport. In addition, the Wizards' Guild carefully limits the amounts of exchange of monies, so that a bare minimum of Unnight coinage ever makes its way off planet; stringent inspections at the starport also help regulate this. All trade is handled on a barter basis.

Other rates of exchange do occur in backwoods minor cities and among strange clans. The SM should feel free to create these as he pleases.

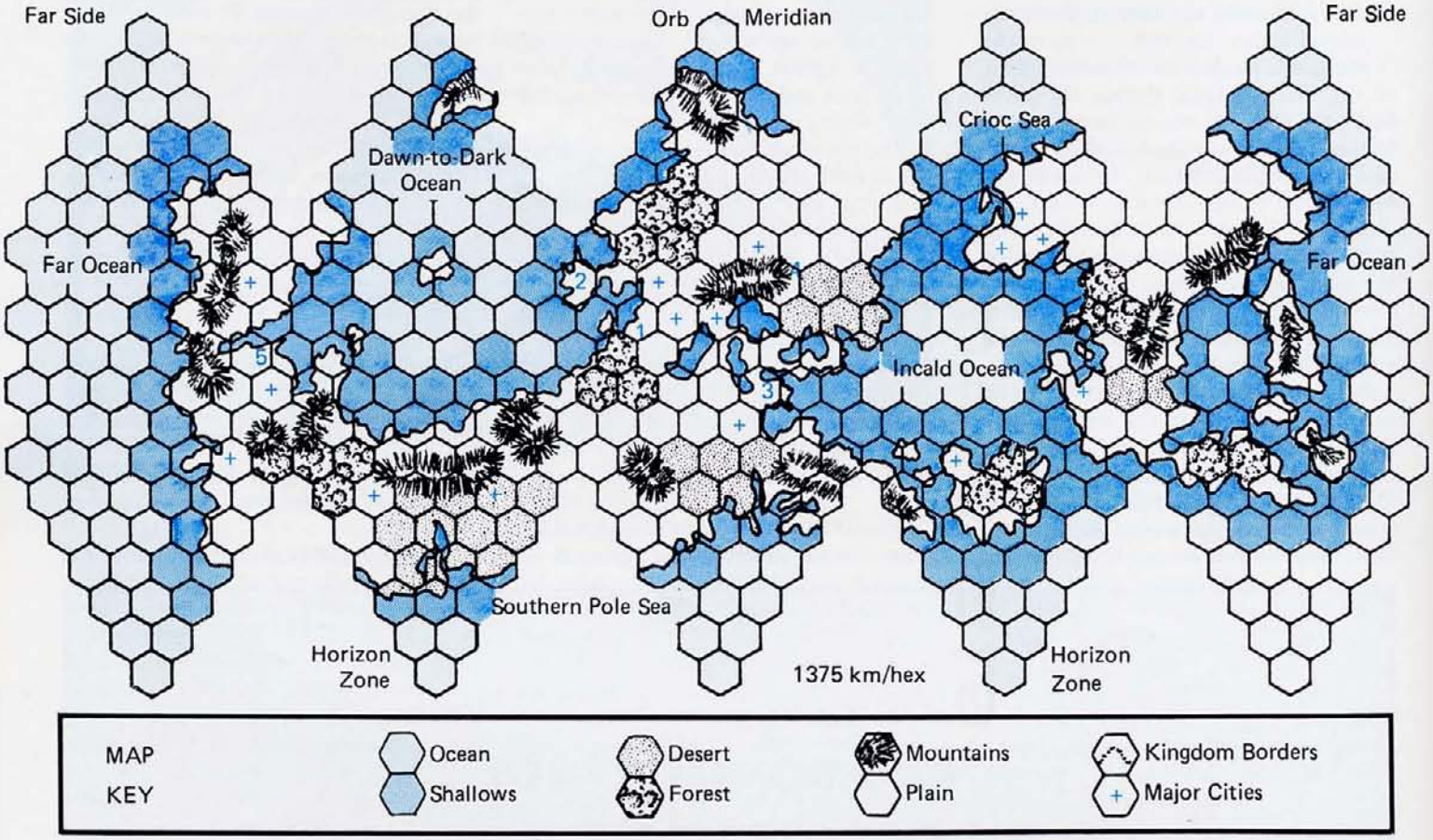
# 22

**United Federation of Planets**
**Department of Interstellar Survey**

**Survey Evaluation, Planet** Unnight
**Star System Designation** Stuzak
**Stellar Primary Type** M0 (White Dwarf)
**Planets in Star System** 5
**Bearing from Marker Star** 258°
**Distance from Marker Star** 56 ly
**Vertical Coordinate** -32
**Planetary Type** Terran

**Orbital Distance** 303 LS
**Length of Year** Five "days"
**Length of day/month** 480 hours
**Temperature Range** -48 to +30°C
**Planetary Diameter** 13,000 km
**Surface Gravity Field** 1.0 G
**Hydrospheric Rating** 60%
**Atmospheric Type** Oxygen/Nitrogen
**Comments on Atmosphere:** Moderately dense, has an anomalously high percentage of noble gasses. The density of the air tends to level temperatures.

**Comments:** Unnight is the heavier of two bodies in the planetary system. The other element, Orb, stays at a mean distance of 1.055 LS. Orbital period about the barycenter is 480 hours. Both worlds are face-locked, which makes the Unnight day 480 hours long, also. Orb's high albedo and angular diameter provides Unnight with 45 times the light of a moonlit night on Terra. The temperature changes are levelled in effect by the dense atmosphere.




**United Federation of Planets**
**Contacts Service**

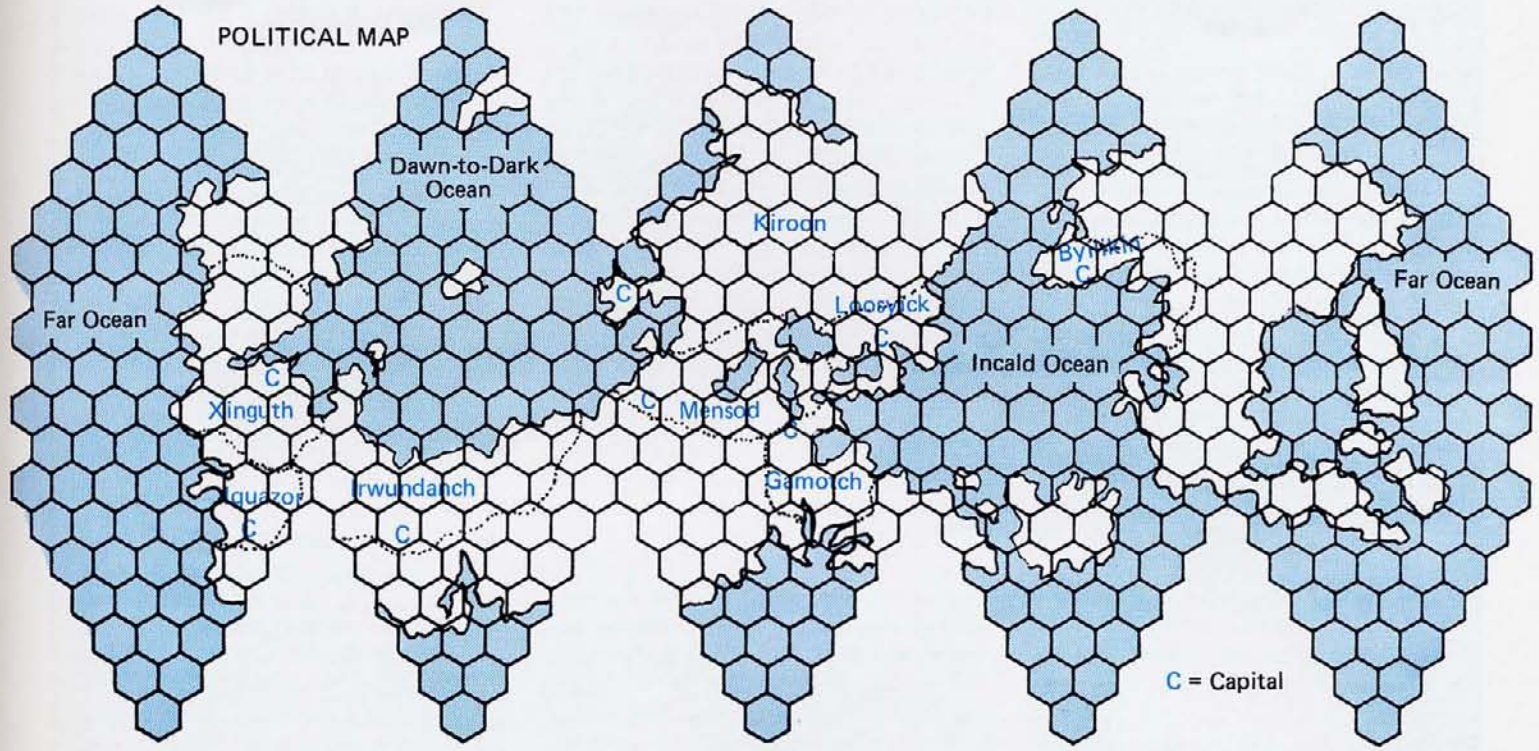
**Sentient Race Report, Planet** Unnight
**Technological Level** 3
**Sentient Race Type** Human Standard
**Population Level** 12.5 million
**Population Density** low-very low
**Social Organization** Aristocratic
**Societal Strength** 5
**Xeno Acceptance Index** 6%

| Major Cities | Population | Starport Facilities | Docking Charges |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Meddyfice | 20,000 | D | 50/10 |
| 2 Tyrnington | 15,000 | | |
| 3 Byreville | 8,000 | | |
| 4 The Scarps | 11,000 | | |
| 5 Bazilino | 17,000 | E | 50/ 5 |

**Government:**
**Type of Government** Multi-Government
**Bureaucracy Level** Generally low
**Support Index** variable
**Loyalty Index** variable
**Repression Index** @ 50%
**Corruption Index** @ 15%
**Law Level** 17
**Tax Rate** @ 40%
**Political Parties and Significant Policies:** There are eight kingdoms on Unnight, all feudalistic. The commoners have some petition powers. The "Wizards" have considerable influence through fear and respect.
**Current Political Situation:**
**Party in Government** Feudal Lords
**Stability** 90%
**Vote** ——
**Party/Parties Opposing** Wizards' guilds / Freemen's guild
**Vote** ——
**Current Foreign Alliances:**
**Trade Alliances** Contact service of Midgard's Ardecco province prevents import of high-tech goods. Outworld League junior partner.
**Military Alliances** *League Defense treaty.* SADAR and patrols maintained to protect the world from piracy or invasion.
**Other Alliances** None
**Planetary Trade and Commerce:**
**Industrialization Index** Primitive agricultural
**Average Income** 300
**Technology and Anomalies** The "wizards" are skilled chemists and showmen who hold a monopoly on technological goods and learning. Efficient detection of "psionic" skills notable.
**Major Imports** Primitive arms, medicines, tools
**Major Exports** Foodstuffs, artwork
**Import/Export Restrictions and Duties** The Ardecco contact edict permits trade in low-tech goods: Medicines and books must be sold to the "Wizards."
**Trade Acceptance Index** 30%

**General Comments:** The tensions between the kingdoms occasionally turns into open warfare, with the Wizards selling help to both sides, Mercenaries armed with tech-3 weapons are welcome, if they fight for the nations of which Ardecco approves. Visitors are asked to report to Ardecco contact service HQ at Meddyfice for instruction.

Two "Valkyrie" corvettes provide protection. 61% SADAR network with orbital monitor station.




**United Federation of Planets**
**Department of Interstellar Survey**

**Survey Evaluation, Planet** Orb
**Star System Designation** Stuzak
**Stellar Primary Type** M0 (White Dwarf)
**Planets in Star System** 5
**Bearing from Marker Star** 258°
**Distance from Marker Star** 56 ly
**Vertical Coordinate** -32

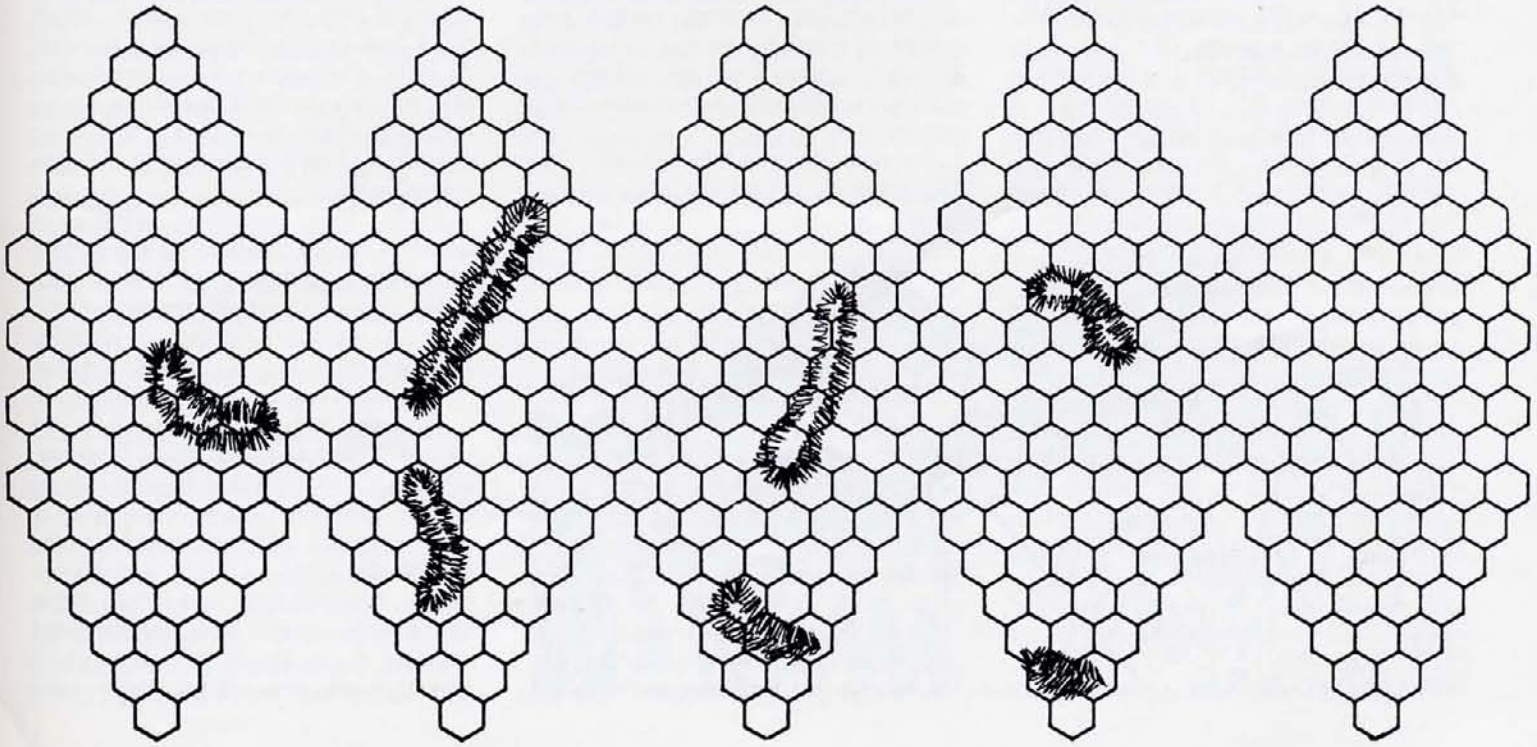
**Planetary Type** Low density, thin atmosphere / binary
**Orbital Distance** 303 ± 1.055 LS
**Length of Year** Five "days"
**Length of Day** 480 hours
**Temperature Range** -150°C to +10°C
**Planetary Diameter** 19,000 km
**Surface Gravity Field** 0.00224 G
**Hydrospheric Rating** 0%
**Atmospheric Type** Nitrogen/Methane

**Comments on Atmosphere:** 80mm pressure

**Comments:** Moon: Orbette — 2500 km diameter, orbital period 240 hours.

Smaller element of a binary planet system. Orbits about Unnight; barycenter is within Unnight.

There are no life forms or installations on Orb. Low density indicates little chance of valuable minerals.



ants of a group of colonists who managed to preserve a modicum of technology while the rest of the inhabitants of the planet descended into near-barbarism. Some of their knowledge was preserved merely in books and records, but several technological items were saved by the group as well. Their secrets were guarded jealously at first, and no one else on Unnight was aware of the knowledge possessed by these Wizards-to-be. Eventually, the guardians of technology decided it was time to reveal their presence and make use of what they'd kept – for reasons both noble and ignoble. Thus was born the Wizards' Guild.

The Wizards perform many tasks throughout the various Unnight nations: They advise the peasants when to plant their crops, nobles how to tax and run their holdings, and generals how to fight battles. By coordinating their actions, the Wizards have become an important force in maintaining the nations' status-quo while advancing their own interests.

The Wizards recruit from the peasantry and merchants from all of the kingdoms. These apprentices are sent to fortress-schools to learn the trade and become indoctrinated in the Wizards' philosophy. Apprentices who rebel or turn out to be incompetent are sent to mines and herb-plantations to live out the rest of their lives. Adepts who survive are assigned to a village to serve (or prey upon), or are trained to be wandering showmen or mercenaries.

A Wizard's abilities are many. When a peasant child suffers from rickets (a common occurrence on Unnight), the village Wizard can administer a potion of vitamin D. If a nasty animal has chosen to roost for the day in the town square, the Wizard can loose a gunpowder fireball to destroy or chase it away. If a noble needs to scare a town into paying its taxes, a troupe of showmen can summon a demon (actually a trained animal, shaved and painted to resemble a monstrous being) to rampage through the rebellious town's fields and eat the livestock.

Using a tightly-organized net of informers, messengers and spies, the Wizards' Guild can learn of important events very quickly. Sneak attacks are virtually impossible without Guild approval. PCs who try to smuggle high-tech goods or provide skills to a nation the Guild doesn't like may find themselves in hot water.

Encountered Wizards will all be at least "above normal" NPCs. They will be knowledgeable in survival and scout skills, linguistics, herbal medicine and first aid, showmanship, primitive chemistry, animal handling, streetwisdom (very high), administration, and swimming. A typical Wizard will have throwing daggers, primitive grenades and pyrotechnics, bags of disguises, and a load of small scrolls and books in a cryptic language . . . messages for Wizards in towns through which he or she plans to travel. Some Wizards will have large (class L) animals to act as pets and guardians.

Wizards make up about 0.1% of the population. Virtually every town of more than 100 people will have one in residence, and large cities have many, sometimes living in a single fortified house, complete with secret rooms in which to hide valuables. Mercenaries occasionally hire Wizards to assist them in battle (though the Wizard in question may consider it the other way around), and national armies in favor with the Guild may have martial magicians in their employ.

**VII. Wildlife Encounters**

On any untamed planet such as Unnight, vast regions still exist where native animal and plant life dominate the environment. Because of the early scattering of the settlers, farming villages were usually separated by tracts of wilderness. In some regions, farming villages are patches of civilization in vast seas of wild country.

On each day (24-hour standard day, still in use by the settlers, who tell time by the revolution of Orb's asteroidal moon, Orbette) of travel in the wilderness, there is a 10% chance of a "significant" animal encounter; it is assumed that there will be many sightings of common herbivores and small, unassuming carnivores throughout the day, but these encounters will lead to nothing unless the adventurers decide to hunt or attack. Creature types are described on page 25.

For the basic encounter type, a d100 is rolled and the chart below is consulted:

*Roll 1d100:*

1-50 Herbivore: The PCs' party encounters one or more herbivores in such a manner as to constitute a nuisance or danger to the adventurers. Examples: A stampede of herd animals; a large, very curious creature starts feeding on the party's tents; or a swarm of locustlike insects chew up the party's rations. At *night* this encounter type will be quite different, as 90% of herbivores will be hibernating or hiding. Roll a second d100: On a roll of 1-50 there will be no encounter; on a roll of 51-90 the party will stumble on a herbivore or herd of herbivores in "night mode," (in shells, cocoons, or curled into little balls for protection). There is a 15% chance that a scavenger or carnivore will be trying to break open a shell to feed on the contents. On a roll of 91-00, the PCs will encounter a herbivore species adapted to night living. Such a species will eat anything that doesn't try to get away, such as carrion, garbage, shelled animals and plants, etc.

51-80 Scavenger encounter: The party encounters several dangerous scavenger-types. They will attack from hiding, or lurk after the party, waiting for them to run into trouble. The PCs will be in no danger if they spot these animals, which avoid attacking prey that can fight back. At night, scavengers will be more dangerous, and this class will include swarms of vermin (rodents and insects) that make mass attacks on anything not in a shell or hiding up a tree.

81-95 True carnivores: The party members will be attacked by a very large or numerous creature-type that attempts to kill them for food. The beasts will run away if seriously threatened, dragging away any prey they might have killed at that point.

At night, roll a d100: On a 1-50, the party will find an excapsulated carnivore. If the PCs pester the creature in this state, it may suddenly come to life, spray a noxious/poison liquid, or tunnel into the ground. On a roll of 51-75, a night carnivore is encountered – a totally fierce and berserk creature that will tear apart anything it can get its paws on with no regard to its own safety. Pack-hunting

# Unnight Animalac:

**Representative Samples of Unnight Fauna**

Following are several examples of animal life indigenous to Unnight. These should be considered medium-sized examples of classes of animals; for each one presented below, there will be larger and smaller varieties, varieties adapted for specific environments, etc.

*Sith:* (grazer) Class K animal; carrying capacity – 10%; natural weapon – J; movement – slow; armor – E.

The sith is a roughly turtle-shaped animal which is dark brown in color. It is a totally passive animal which will withdraw into its shell at the first sign of danger.

*Chint:* (carnivore) Class J animal; carrying capacity – 30%; natural weapon – see below; movement – average; armor – F.

The chint looks like a cross between an armadillo and a centipede. It sleeps during the day and hunts for sleeping animals during the night. Its retractible probiscus excretes a special acid which, in less than five minutes, will eat a small hole in any native animal's shell. The chint is prized for the acid it makes, which is of special interest to the Wizards' Guild.

*Spiker:* (ambusher) Class L animal; carrying capacity – 100%; natural weapon – E; movement – very fast; armor – K.

The spiker is a small animal with very long and thin legs. After finding a suitable shell (emptying it if necessary), it will crawl inside, lie on its back, and wait to be attacked. When it is attacked, its legs spring out of the natural shell openings with all of the spiker's amazing strength behind them. Note that the spiker has no shell of its own; it relies totally on evacuated shells for protection.

*Pebb:* (standard scavenger) Class O animal; carrying capacity – 20%; natural weapon – I; movement – fast; armor – E.

A pebb is a small animal, which builds its shell much like a caterpillar builds a cocoon. While inside its shell, its movement rate is very slow. It moves by shifting its weight, occasionally poking its head out to see where it's going. It can also move independently of its shell (fast), but it rarely does so. When stationary, it is often mistaken for a rock.

*Brok:* (aggressor) Class varies with age; carrying capacity – maximum for class; natural weapon – maximum for class; movement – very slow to fast (dependent on age); armor – starts at J and becomes I at animal class I, armor H at class H, and so on, until armor becomes A at animal class A.

The brok is a sea creature which, from the surface, appears as a large flat disk, the diameter of which varies with age (2 m when young, 6 m when fully mature, 12+m when very old). The disk is actually the brok's shell. From underwater, its many tentacles may be seen. The brok is capable of reaching above the water with its tentacles. It is very aggressive when approached, but will not actively pursue prey.

(Note on all animals – damage factor, stamina factor, shock CR, and hand-to-hand must be rolled for each animal according to the chart in section 17.0 of *Space Opera:* Volume 2, "The Beasts.")

Of course, these are not the only types of animal life indigenous to the planet; the SM is free to create other appropriate life-forms. In addition, many varieties of standard Terran animals were brought to the world: cats, dogs, horses, cattle, some varieties of birds, llamas, and many others; several of the original colonists were conservationists who hoped to give the Terran species a new lease on life by bringing them here. Generally, though, these species are fully domesticated, needing man's protection from the elements during the planet's severe nights.

versions of this type are really trouble. On a roll of 76-00, a can-opener class creature will be found. This type lives solely on encapsulated or shelled creatures, avoiding any resisting prey. They often have natural countermeasures to protect themselves from the poisons some hibernating animals use for protection.

96-00: This is an unusual or plant encounter. *Plants* in the daytime are usually close to earth-normal. At night, things are very different. Plants either shrivel up, leaving spores or roots to carry on, or curl into shells and pods to guard against the cold. A final plant type is the colony tree. In the day, the colony trees live via photosynthesis. When the sun slips below the horizon and the cold enroaches, the tree's limbs wrap around the trunk and small ports open along the trunk. Inside these holes live one or more species of rodent or insect that forage nocturnally, leaving droppings and dead bodies in the tree to nourish it during the night. Colony trees can be dangerous; if a living creature brushes against one, the limbs shoot out and smash the intruder, providing a ready source of carrion for their symbiotes.

Other encounters can include earthquakes (which are very common due to the wobble/drift in Orb's orbit; if the two worlds were not face-locked, the tidal effects and resulting earthquakes and vulcanism would be much worse), bad storms, forest fires, and other accidents.

**VIII. Native Encounters**

The SM should roll for encounters every day in the deep wilderness, every two hours in settled countryside, every hour in a town or large city.

*Large Town:* More than 1,000 people. Add six to the roll on the encounter table in a major town or city (more than 10,000 people) and add ten in capital cities and starports. There is a 50% chance per hour of an important encounter. Roll 1d100:

1-50 Townsmen: Merchants, craftsmen, local officials, fortune-tellers, etc. They may have an opportunity for the PCs.

51-70 Commoners: Country folk, in town to sell their goods. They will be very suspicious, frightened, or fascinated by offworlders.

71-75 Backwoods trader: He or she may have interesting goods. He or she will generally be a Wizards' Guild spy or adept.

76-80 Mercenaries: A group of 12d10 men with swords, armor, bow weapons, and excellent training. There is a 5% chance that 1d10 are offworlders seeking their fortune. Some of the mercenaries will be Wizards' Guild informers.

81-85 Noble: With 2d10+10 retinue. S/he will be eager to impress the PCs and might invite them to his or her estate. Nobles from some countries will be less polite . . .

86-90 Conflict situation: A fight between gangs of workers, a noble or merchant fighting off thugs, a bar fight, a Wizard blasting someone who crossed him/her, etc. The SM may wish to involve the PC in the situation.

91-00 A major Wizards' Guild official: With retinue and assistants. He or she may be anxious to coverse with the PCs to find out what is going on out in the universe. Employment and information may be available from the official.

101-105 High noble and retinue.

106-110 Offworlders.

*Farming Village:* There are thousands of these scattered about the countryside. Roll every two hours, 50% chance for an encounter. Note that strangers will always draw a crowd of local children, gossips, and curious folk. These people will not bother the PCs unless provoked. The encounters below are "active" encounters that deal directly with the PCs.

1-50 Commoners ask the PCs to tell a story, read a sign that the local noble put up, or ask them for advice on an obscure subject.

51-80 Townsmen offer the PCs trade

goods, or ask the party if they have anything to sell.

81-85 The village Wizard meets with the PCs. He or she may be checking up on them or simply curious. The Wizard can report to his local HQ by a trained bird or animal in 4d6 hours, so the PCs may have a hard time keeping their movements secret.

86-90 The local noble and retinue are in town to administer justice or collect taxes.

91-95 A troupe of showmen comes through town. They are Wizards' Guild allies or informers and are excellent fighters. Important business is often carried out by the Guild under the guise of such a circus.

96-00 A troop of mercenaries or national troops. Both may be possible employers for the PCs.

*Wilderness:* There are two types of wilderness: the deep woods and settled areas. The latter is land within 1 hex of a major town or capital city on the map. Roll every two hours in these settled areas, with an encounter taking place 10% of the time. In the deep wilderness, roll once per day, with a 50% chance of an encounter taking place.

Roll 1d100, adding 20 if in settled land.

1-50 Wandering merchant on foot alone or on a wagon with 1d10+5 guards.

51-60 1d10+10 bandits on riding beasts. They have bows, leather armor, spears, and swords. Offworlders might be able to cow them or make them allies.

61-70 Showmen troupe, as in farming village encounter.

71-80 Mercenaries or national army. They will stop and question strangers.

81-90 Religious group on a pilgrimage: 3d10 people, unarmed, with 1d6+2 hired guards. Depending on the religion of the mob, they may be enthralled or enraged by the offworlder PCs.

91-00 Traveller's inn: This is a group of buildings with a protective stockade. Food and shelter are available here. There will be 3d6+5 guards on hand to protect the inn from brigands, about ten workers and servants, and a number of guests. Roll once on the farming village chart to see if any unusual guests are present.

101-110 Farm house and fields. If properly approached, most farmers will put up travelers for the night. There will always be work that needs doing, especially near nightfall, and the farmer will let his guests know this (nudge, nudge).

111-120 Farming village with 50xd6 people. An inn will be available. Roll for encounters on the farming village chart.

Nighttime travel: At night, all but the hardiest and most foolhardy travelers stay at home or make semi-permanent camps. The animals, people, and phenomena abroad at night are not conducive to long life. Temperatures drop 1d10°C per 24-hour day after nightfall for three days, then stabilize around the seasonal norm (see page 19). The light from Orb is more than adequate for travel, but provides no heat. Near seas, violent storms are a virtual certainty.

*The Night Dance:* No one is sure what it is, or what causes it, but the phenomenon known as the night madness or the "Night Dance" is a fact of life on Unnight. When someone is out at night, away from large concentrations of people, there is a chance that he or she will go mad, running off into the woods, climbing trees and making funny noises, etc. The most common manifestation is the "mumbles": The victim talks in an unknown tongue, staring fearfully about at his friends and familiar objects, and generally acting "out of place."

There is a 10% chance per 24 hours spent on the road at night that a randomly-selected party member will become afflicted with the Night Dance. This chance is decreased by 1% for every 10 people in the vicinity. When someone contracts the Dance, roll 1d100 for the degree of effect and 1d10 for the duration in hours. A roll of 1-50 for effect indicates that the victim lies down and chants in a strange language; 51-80 indicates that the affected one runs into the woods and capers about shouting the words to a weird alien song; 81-00 indicates that the victim has become dangerously disoriented and may become violent.

Some Wizards have drugs that can shock a person with the Night Dance back to reality. A strong stun bolt will have the same effect.

**IX. Scenario Ideas**

***Unnight*** has many potential opportunities for adventure and PC employment. Below are a few suggestions, listed by employment type.

*Mercenaries:*

1. On a nearby world (Alkast, if using ***The Outworlds***), the PCs are approached by an agent for a Midgard-based corporation that manufactures tools and weapons designed for primitive cultures. The agent will ask the party leader to meet him at a restaurant to discuss business. The company needs a small number of mercenaries (around ten) to assist on a trade mission on Unnight. The warriors will be given passage there and back, standard pay for security duty, plus 0.1% of the company's stock per man.

The mission will prove more dangerous than the agent indicated. The PCs and their NPC underlings will have to guard five very pushy and undiscriminating salesmen on a trip from Meddyfice to Xinguth. The Wizards of the intervening countryside will not be very happy about the visit, as the salesmen are trying to sell Xinguth large amounts of titanium and improved-design primitive weapons.

2. The Arddecan contact service requires the services of skilled off-world mercenaries to train and reinforce the armies of several nobles on the border of Gamotch and Mensod. The nobles were formerly neutral, but have now allied themselves to Mensod in exchange for support from the Wizards' Guild and off-world armsmen. Pay will be 1.5 standard combat pay to encourage mercs to brave the dangers of warfare on the primitive, hospital-free world.

3. Pirates running tech-four gunpowder weapons to rebellious clan heads in Xinguth need guards.

*Merchants:*

1. A vast market exists for tools better in design than the crude iron and steel mechanisms made by the Unnight folk. A caravan touring the backwoods of Byilikin or Iquazor can make thousands if it survives bandits and hostile animal life.

2. Unscrupulous traders can try to smuggle high-tech weapons onto the planet, but must be prepared to make a quick getaway: the Wizards of all nations will object to the local nobles arming themselves with superior weaponry.

*Researchers:*

1. There are many unexplored places on Unnight. Strange wildlife and odd cus-

toms abound. The Ardeccans will be glad to sponsor expeditions into the outback and may provide native guides.

2. Unnight and Orb have some very definite oddities: Neither world is old enough to have become face-locked; the orbits of the two worlds are much too stable: it is predicted that the worlds will remain in their present configuration for at least another four billion years; and Orb doesn't have anywhere near the mass it should for its size and apparent composition.

3. And then there's the Night Dance . . .

*Whoops:*

Accidents can force a group of PCs to spend time on Unnight. The Pemzann-Ceti Nebula surrounds the Stuzak system; the pirates who are based there may release prisoners here or damaged ships may have to limp here to await a repair ship.

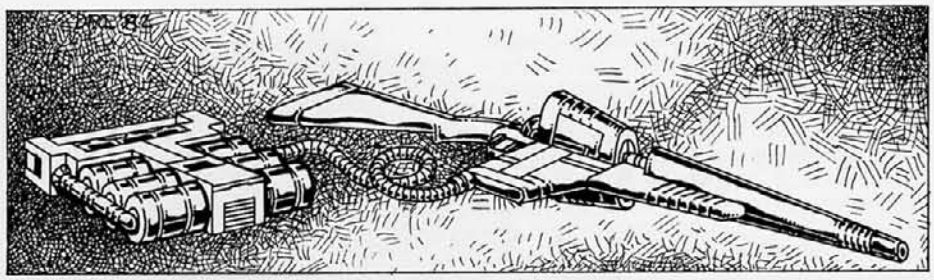
**X. Ancients and Artifacts**

Though they never would have suspected it, the human settlers on Unnight were not the first colonists. The only apparent sign of these folk is the Night Dance; this phenomenon is literally a form of "possession."

The Ornon were a widespread and highly-advanced race extant some seven million years ago. The Forerunners familiar to the Federation were barbarians compared to these folk: Whole worlds were moved by them, and Unnight was one of these. For some unknown reason – perhaps whimsy – the ancients put the newly-terraformed world into a binary relationship with Orb, which they had hollowed into what is now essentially a planetary balloon. (An interesting campaign for the industrious SM might be to explore and find out what is inside the hollow world, once that planet's nature is discovered.) Orbette was also added into the system, possibly only for amusement.

The colonists left few traces of themselves or their tools. It is thought that toward the "end" the beings tended to rely more and more on psionics. Eventually, the creatures died out, or perhaps mutated into unintelligent life forms. They left one device in operation: a psionic record-keeper. This device is what causes the "Night Dance"; a scared or lonely person emanates the telepathic "phone number" of the storage device, and the mechanism sends out the requested information. Unfortunately, the average human will misinterpret the information meant for an alien mind, resulting in the erratic behavior of the Night Dance.

*Archaeology:* The SM may wish to have a peasant find an artifact or building site. The object may become a local



curiosity, or the basis of a weird religion. The PCs may have an interesting time convincing the locals to give up their treasure.

99% of all artifacts found will either be so simple as to afford no information, or so incredibly complex as to baffle the most advanced engineering lab. The remaining 1% will be usable objects, such as PSI crystals, solid rods that project holographic images when held, and "Black Boxes" that perform interesting tricks when analyzed or opened. "Magical" effects, within limits, are possible and sometimes used by Wizards.

Using hand tools, one man will have a cumulative 0.1% chance of finding an artifact per day. In a site area (50% chance of one per 10,000 square km of area) the chance is doubled. If high-tech instruments can be brought in, the chances of finding an object are increased by a factor of five. Note import and travel restrictions!

If Ardecco or its competitors find out about successful archaeological projects on Unnight, the competition to get a piece of the action will be fierce! Mercenaries and criminals will have a field day in the fracas that follows.

# Appendices

**Appendix I: Travel and Equipment Restrictions**

Upon landing at either starport, travellers will be under the jurisdiction of Ardecco contact services. All luggage and personnel will be thoroughly searched, and IDs checked. No vehicles other than beast-drawn or sail-powered are allowed. The latter may have a communicator or emergency signaling device installed, but the set must be tuned to the official emergency channel.

Travellers may carry personal medkits, unpowered armor, and other equipment with a purely defensive function. Each person may carry a short-range (PC/5 maximum) communicator. No high-tech weapons may be carried, and complex equipment of all sorts is frowned upon!

Trade goods must be inspected by an Ardeccan official, and local Wizards will zealously guard their prerogative of dispensing knowledge and technology to the common folk.

**Appendix II: NPC Attributes**

The NPC race section for humans in Volume Two of ***Space Opera*** can be used to generate NPC attributes. The following guidelines should help.

*Common folk:* The average peasant will be a Below Average human. Peasants will have a wide variety of skills related to survival and making a living; i.e., a fisherman would have marine survival, small-craft handling, and perhaps weapons skills in crossbow and sword or brawling. Very few peasants will be literate, and even fewer will know what lies beyond the horizon visible from their home village.

*Soldiers:* Mercenaries will be better fed and educated than their commonfolk parents. Most will be Average, with about 30% Above Average, while officers are Competent or better. Skills appropriate to a low-tech armsman, plus a heavy assortment of survival skills, will be available to every soldier.

*Wizards:* The stats and skills are given for Wizards in Section VI. Weaponry skills emphasize ranged combat.

"Magic" weaponry equivalents:

*Primitive rocket/fireball:* Disposable Rocket Launcher, range x ¼.

*Breath of Death:* H-sized grenade with a P4 poison gas chemical released on explosion.

*Demon:* A class L beast, 20 DF, 75 Stamina, HTH rating 20, class F weapon + P4 poison on metal spurs, "fast."

*Dragon's Breath:* A 20kg Flamer Pistol, range x ¼. Very dangerous to both sides in a battle. The "Greek fire" thrown burns for 1-6 rounds.

Other: All Wizards carry small (J- and H-sized) smoke and HE grenades. All are 2d6 heavier than their modern equivalents, and are somewhat unreliable. *All* of the above equipment will be surrounded by a "smokescreen" of useless parts, cryptic instructions, and booby traps. Soldiers who try to use wizardly weapons captured on the field don't live very long.

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CLAW LAW (Iron Crown Enterprises); $6. Designed by S. Coleman Charlton, Bruce R. Neidinger, Terry K. Amthor, Leonard Cook, and Peter C. Fenlon, Jr. Supplement to *Arms Law.* Twelve 8½" x 11" parchment sheets. Published 1982.

CLAW LAW is the "long-awaited" supplement to *Arms Law.* Its main attraction is the 12 new attack tables, such as bite, talon, sting, etc. These tables are done in a similar fashion to those found in *Arms Law:* a single die roll resolves both hit and damge. Also included are four new critical hit charts, over a hundred monsters and animals converted into CLAW LAW statistics for use in fantasy campaigns, a detailed martial arts system, and 44 new weapons to be used with *Arms Law.* In short, CLAW LAW is a detailed combat system for monsters and animals, usable with "any FRPG."

The best thing about this game is that it adds more realism to a game without taking away any of the playability. The new critical hit charts add flavor, but the pace of the combat remains very fast. Another useful item is the monster list. Despite the small size of the list, it is useful to GMs who want to create new monsters or adapt old ones to the CLAW LAW system. The martial arts system included is short, but usable.

The only real problem I saw was the price. Six bucks for a dozen sheets of flimsy cardboard! I think this could have been lowered. Also, the comedians who wrote the critical hit results get carried away occasionally. Consider: It is possible (though highly unlikely) for a rabbit (of normal size) to jump up in the air and sever a man's jugular vein. Hmmm . . .

If you own *Arms Law* and like it, this is for you. If you are pleased with the combat system you use now, or you don't like the idea of killer rabbits, you can live without it.

*—Richard Wolfe, Jr.*

FANTASY WARGAMING (Stein and Day); $14.95, or reduced price through the Science Fiction Book Club. Compiled by Bruce Galloway. 300-page hardback book. Published 1981 in Britain, 1982 in America.

This is a book of rules for a fantasy role-playing game set in a medieval European environment; "fantasy wargaming" means "fantasy role-playing." The first 117 pages explain the society, religions and monster lore of historical Europe, and provide guides to modern fantasy authors and how to be a gamemaster. The remainder of the book provides game rules. Characters may specialize in clerical, magical, or combat work. Nineteen attributes are rolled on 3d6. To use magic, a character must use "mana" points to establish a link to the etherial plane *and* make the right die rolls; mana is regained through meditation, frantic dancing, and other activities. In combat, the difference in agility indicates a column on the Combat Results Table. Percentile dice then indicate if the blow landed and where. Monsters and adventures are taken from legend and heraldry.

Some ideas are fine: the mana and etherial plane parts of the magic system, seven chapters devoted solely to background material, using heraldic beasts (lion-headed eagles, etc), and modifying attributes by zodiac sign.

However, this game is abysmal. The rules are vague (I'm still not sure how to roll up a character), limiting (characters must make saving rolls to avoid "temptations" such as greed or bravery, and to avoid following a leader's orders!), and provide no specific help on designing an adventure. Black magic rules for human sacrifice add a dark touch to this game. And the introductory material is really not as good as what you could pick up at any library.

I've never seen a worse game. It's too bad that many people's first experience with FRP may be through buying FANTASY WARGAMING through the Science Fiction Book Club.

*—W.G. Armintrout*

SUPERVILLAINS (Task Force Games); $9.95. Designed by Rick Register. 24-page rulebook, 17" x 22" map, 8" x 11" map, 108 counters, two six-sided dice and one twenty-sided die, boxed. For two or more players. Playing time variable. Published 1982.

SUPERVILLAINS bills itself as "the game of role-playing and tactical combat in modern-day New York City." It is presented in two forms: a basic game, which is a tactical combat game for super-powered individuals, and an advanced game, which purports to be a role-playing system.

One should endeavor to say something nice about the subject of a review. In this case, I can point out that the designer has thoughtfully provided over half a column of instructions on the nomenclature and conventions of dice rolling, and has devoted considerable care to the procedures for determining the physical appearance of player-characters. The two-player basic game is straightforward. Within a game turn the players roll dice to determine initiative, then perform movement and combat; i.e., the phasing player moves all his pieces and then resolves their attacks before his opponent does so. Each space on the map represents ten feet of distance, and movement allowances range from 1 to 6. Each game turn represents one *hour* (unless this is a typo, these super critters move with glacial speed). Combat can be hand-to-hand or ranged, and in mode material or intangible. Damage is done in terms of hit or stun points subtracted from the character's initial value. Reduction to zero stun points means unconsciousness, zero hit points death. Basically, attacking requires determining odds (strength, dexterity, and attack bonuses vs. strength, dexterity, and defense bonuses) and consulting a table to determine the die roll needed to succeed. A successful attack inflicts damage points according to its mode and the weapon or power employed.

The combat rules are the heart of the game, but are sketchily written. Too many situations

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arise during play not covered by the rules, so the players must constantly improvise. A lot of playtesters are credited, but the finished product seems to have benefited little by them. The advanced "role-playing" game is a travesty. It requires a game-master and allows multiple players, but it is really just a multi-scenario campaign with almost no scope for role-playing. The object is to control as many as possible of the 20 districts into which the city has been divided. This can be done only in two ways: Bribe the local officials, or beat the local street gangs into servitude. The latter obviously requires combat. The former is accomplished by rolling dice, using bribe money generally obtained by robbing banks.

While super-powered villains are the stuff of comic books, a game about them must be designed at a level demonstrating more sophistication than a comic book. SV fails in this regard. Mr. Register has a vivid imagination, but has failed to translate his ideas into a coherent form. Coupled with this is the typical lack of care shown by TFG in proofreading, editing, and organizing their products. The combination is deadly. Avoid SUPERVILLAINS.

*–Steve List*

## SUPPLEMENTS

LIBERATION AT RIVERTON (Timeline); $7. Scenario for *The Morrow Project*. Designed by H.N. Voss. One 8½" x 11" 52-page book, 11" x 17" Project Director's map and screen. For Project Director and three to eight players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

LIBERATION AT RIVERTON is the first released scenario for Timeline's excellent after-the-holocaust RPG, *The Morrow Project*. Designated as Project File 001, RIVERTON is designed for use by beginning players, though with a little alteration it could serve as a challenging excursion for experienced MP players as well. It centers around a Morrow Recon team awakening from its unscheduled 150-year-long nap near the little community of Riverton, a town all but wiped out during the turmoil following the war. The mission of the recon team, once it's clear it is cut off from other Morrow groups, is to find its supply caches and to use them and the team members' expertise to help rebuild civilization in the area. There are some problems: The surrounding territory, thanks to a nearby nuke hit, is somewhat changed from that shown on the players' maps. And there is a nearby military reservation, where the descendants of some National Guard MPs (now called "Imps" so as not to be confused with the Project personnel) may prove troublesome . . . The scenario package contains everything needed for the Project Director (the new title for the MP GM) to run the adventure, including a map of the area's true appearance, a player's map of how it once looked, maps of the remaining part of the town and of a local farm, a map of the Imps' camp and the armory HQ building, stats for important town and Imp NPCs, an interior diagram of the team's V-150 vehicle and of the MP "bolt hole," plus six pre-generated player-characters for use by the players (though up to eight characters may fit in the bolt hole). In addition, some new weapons and items of equipment are introduced in this scenario – including complete stats on weapons from the .45 automatic and the M3A1 "grease gun" to the M68 105mm cannon used on the M60A1 MBT, and vehicles from the ubiquitous jeep to the M60 Main Battle Tank itself. As an added

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attraction, there are nine pages of very detailed hit location tables for the V-150 and the M60A1 for those who are realism fanatics.

LIBERATION AT RIVERTON is an excellently conceived and executed product. As much info as any GM (PD?) would need for either a one-shot scenario or the basis of an extended campaign beginning with the Riverton situation is provided. It fills a gap that has been empty in the *Morrow Project* product list for too long now. Especially nice are the plans for the V-150 and the new auto-nav unit that provides the players with (possibly misleading) area maps.

The only flaws I've found so far with LaR is in the printing of the maps: Some of the lines on a couple of them didn't print well and are so light it is difficult to make out some features. Also, due to the printing on the PD and players' area maps, I have yet to positively locate all six of the team's supply caches.

Still, LIBERATION AT RIVERTON is a worthy effort and is, one hopes, only the first in a string of scenarios for use with TMP to alleviate the problems of those of us who don't have the time to create our own.

*–William A. Barton*

RUNEQUEST BORDERLANDS (Chaosium) $16. Supplement for ***Runequest***. Designed by a cast of dozens. One 48-page referee handbook, one 32-page encounter book, seven scenario booklets, one 17" x 22" map, other play aids, boxed. For four or more players with referee. Multiple play sessions. Published 1982.

BORDERLANDS is a complete adventure comprising seven progressive scenarios, each intended for a group of 4-6 medium-powerful and 1-2 beginning characters. The setting is in the valley and environs of the River of Cradles, which forms the border between the Plains of Prax and the Genert Wastes to the east. The time is not given but seems to be about two years after the battle of Moonbroth (1610 ST) in which the Lunar Empire defeated the partially united tribes of Prax to extend its sway beyond subjugated Sartar to Corflu and Pavis. Political turmoil within the Empire has led to the exile of many nobles guilty of no worse than having the wrong relatives. One such is Duke Raus of Rone, who in compensation for his lost lands has been given Weis Domain, centered on the River east of Horn Gate. The Duke, with his family and household, has arrived to establish a fort and prepare for the influx of Lunar colonists the following year. Players are to become mercenaries in the Duke's service, and will gain in experience and possibly wealth as they progress through the scenarios. These start with a tour of the holding to size up the native inhabitants and apprise them of Raus's arrival; later ones are more involved and include a police action against river pirate ducks and a kidnap rescue attempt.

The information provided for the referee is very detailed and comprehensive (although familiarity with ***Cults of Prax*** and ***Cults of Terror*** is very helpful). Some of it has been previously published (e.g., Agimori and Morokanth articles in *Wyrm's Footnotes,* treasures from Rudy Kraft's ***Plunder***), but the majority is new material. In addition to some extra skills there is fascinating lore, such as the reproductive and recreational sexual habits of broos (yecch), and two representatives of a new type of cult. This is the spirit cult, basically a shrine officiated over by a shaman and devoted to a spirit rather than a deity. Such cults provide


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limited rune magic and some of the benefits of the more powerful cults. The general discussion of the political situation in Prax and Pavis at this time (as well as loose ends left from the various scenarios) allow the Duke's Domain to remain in use as a setting even after the seven scenarios are completed, while an option is given to allow players to tie into activities in Balazar (the general setting of *Griffin Mountain*). The physical production of the components is excellent. The artwork is attractive without being intrusive, the layout is well-planned and the contents are remarkably free of typos. The design credits are detailed on an insert sheet; altogether, 14 individuals are credited for parts of the design and many more with other aspects of the production.

This package is not inexpensive, but it's worth the price. However, the emphasis here is on the scenarios, so BORDERLANDS is not as useful as a source book as *Griffin Mountain.* Unlike *Griffin Mountain*, though, the scenario structure provided requires virtually no scene setting by the GM before play can begin. For RQ fans, the only reason not to acquire this one is the hope of one day playing in it.

*–Steve List*

THE SOLOMANI RIM, *Traveller* Supplement 10 (GDW); $3.98. Designed by John Harshman. One 6" x 9" 48-page booklet. Published 1982.

For those *Traveller* enthusiasts who have long wondered "What about Earth?" GDW has released its star sector supplement on the region of space around Terra – THE SOLOMANI RIM. RIM is designed in the same basic format as *The Spinward Marches* – some basic information on the area, 16 subsector maps with planetary stats for each world in the subsector, and an explanation of what the world data stats mean so it isn't necessary to keep referring back to Book 3. RIM also has some improvements that GDW has initiated since its *Marches* book. One of the handiest is a miniature centerfold map of the entire sector, showing each subsector in relation to each other with x-boat routes connected, making subsector to subsector travel much simpler to envision – something *Spinward* sadly lacked. The map coding system is the new one developed for *Fifth Frontier War*, showing world population and political status by the size and colors of the letters in the name, or the presence or non-presence of water by color, etc.

Several features of THE SOLOMANI RIM are quite outstanding. Some of the world data codes have been updated, for example. Atmosphere types are extended to F to reflect especially unusual conditions, such as an ellipsoid world with a spherical atmosphere, as in Larry Niven's Known Space world of Jinx. Much more data about the history of the Rim is given than was about the Marches in the earlier supplement, including information on the mysterious Vegans and their Autonomous District, first mentioned more than two years ago in Adventure 1, *The Kinunir*. And then, of course, are the familiar "buzz words" of the names of stars in the local group – Sirius, Alpha Centauri, Tau Ceti, Barnard's Star (though some are listed under their major world's name rather than by star) – plus those that first appeared on the *Imperium* mapboard – Agidda, Gashidda, Dingir, Kinunir – and of course the obligatory literary references – Miskatonic, Nyarlathotep, Barsoom, and even Krypton.

There are few problems in THE SOLOMANI RIM, most being mere matters of taste. I'd have liked a bit more information on the Vegans' physical (and mental) characteristics than merely "roughly humanoid in body shape but completely nonhuman in detail." And several of the planet names have appeared in other sector supplements – Nyarlathotep in *Beyond*, Barsoom in *Vanguard Reaches*, Thamber in *Spinward*, etc. Of course, in such a large area of space, duplicate names certainly can't be discounted as unrealistic, so these aren't really flaws.

Overall, THE SOLOMANI RIM should definitely appeal to any *Traveller* player or ref who has longed to adventure in the area of Terra or who simply wants to know as much about the universe as possible.

*–William A. Barton*

TRAIL OF THE SKY RAIDERS (FASA); $6. Designed by J. Andrew Keith. Approved for *Traveller*. 6" x 9" 56-page booklet, 11" x 17" map insert. 3-8 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

For those of you who enjoyed FASA's *Legend of the Sky Raiders* and yearned for more information on the mysterious Sky Raiders of the title, there is now a sequel. TRAIL takes up where *Legend* left off, with basically the same player-characters now in command of the Far Trader that the group had the opportunity to steal at the end of the first adventure. On a minor world in the Leage of Suns in the Far Frontiers, the characters find hanging on the wall of a bar an artifact that looks suspiciously like those found in the Sky Raiders' cache on Mirayn, the location of *Legend*. Since the Institute of System Studies on Alzenei in the League paid a considerable sum for those artifacts, it would seem reasonable that they might want more . . . Which leads the group into an adventure of intrigue, kidnapping, and archeological discovery that results in the uncovering of the

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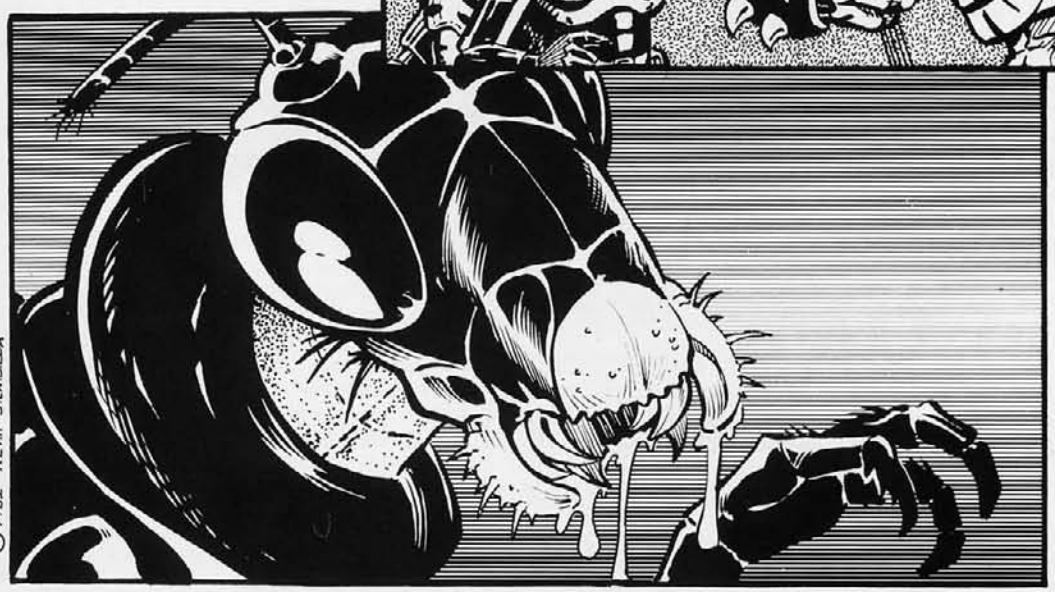

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origin of the mysterious Sky Raiders. Several important NPCs from the first adventure reappear, including Lorain Messandi, the young scientist whose father had been obsessed with the Sky Raiders, and the evil Eneri Kalamanaru and his henchmen. Several other interesting NPCs, a wealth of library data and subsector information on the League of Suns and the Naziesque Descarothe Hegemony in the Jungleblut Subsector, excellent illustrations by Bill Keith, and a set of detailed instructions, rumors, and clues for the referee to disseminate as the players seek out the answers to the mysteries they face make TRAIL just as complete and as satisfying an adventure as its predecessor.

Aside from being a rip-snorting adventure, TRAIL is notable in that it presents the players with a puzzle that they'll have to solve with their brains rather than with their trigger-fingers. There inevitably will be some combat during the course of the scenario, but investigative action, stealth, and deductive reasoning will prove just as important – and usually more so. TRAIL also includes the first mapped-out subsector of the Far Frontiers yet to see print, plus a lot of background info about the area to help fill out the campaign.

The only problems evident in the adventure are in the nature of typos. Most are merely annoyances, but one in the section on information available at the starport allows rumors to be dispensed on a roll of 2+, when the roll is more likely meant to have been at best a 7+.

Overall, TRAIL OF THE SKY RAIDERS looks to be one of the better *Traveller* adventures published yet this year by anyone. Chalk up another success for the Keith brothers and for FASA.

*–William A. Barton*

## ARCADE GAMES

BERZERK (Atari); $29.99. Cartridge for the Atari VCS, with instruction and comic book. One player; playing time usually under 5 minutes. Released 1982.

BERZERK is the latest hit arcade game to be released for the VCS. Here, you control a human who must shoot his way out of a robot-packed maze. To make things tough, the robots can fire back and a smiling, bouncing face named Evil Otto comes to attack near the end of each round. (Depending on the game variation you choose, you can have non-shooting monsters, no Otto, or any combination you desire.)

The graphics in BERZERK are not eye-popping, but they work. The mazes are not that complex, but they suffice. The robots are similar to the arcade version: Sometimes they're fairly cunning, other times they're stupid. The game play is very similar to the arcade version, and it should look very good to the BERZERK fan.

The biggest difference between this version and the arcade game is the lack of speech. When the arcade version was released, it was among the first to have a "voice chip"; it could make the robots say "Human – fight like a robot!" or "Chicken" and other nasty comments. BERZERK loses something without talking robots. (TRS-80 owners have had Big 5's "Robot Attack" for almost a year now. It talks through the cassette port.) Also, a two player – take turns game would have been nice. And with the cartridge, Atari includes a comic book produced by DC Comics. (*Defender* had one, too.) Apparently this is a continuing saga – buy the latest arcade cartridge for the next chapter.

If you liked BERZERK, or if you simply enjoy shooting evil robots in electrified mazes, then look for this at your local store. But watch out for Evil Otto!

*–Ed Driscoll*

CHOPPER COMMAND (Activision); $26.95. Designed by Bob Whitehead. Cartridge for the Atari. Includes one cartridge and three-page instruction booklet. One or two players; playing time one to five minutes. Published 1982.

As a chopper pilot, the player must protect a vital shipment of medical supplies being moved across the desert below in 12 trucks. The only weapon the player has against the enemy fighters and helicopters is his rapid-fire autocannon. The enemy aircraft have multi-warhead missiles and will practice kamikaze attacks often.

The graphics are up to Activision standards, though not particularly new. The main change from a standard shooting game is the insert of a long-range scanner map at the bottom of the screen, which shows the positions of your trucks and the enemy forces, even if they are off the main viewscreen. With ten waves of increasing difficulty in enemy forces it will be extremely difficult for anyone to ever see the end as clearing four or five levels is a real feat. The sounds are also done well, with the chopper blades whooshing and autofire rattling, but again, nothing is particularly great.

CHOPPER COMMAND is a moderately successful shoot-the-enemy game with the added worry of protecting the trucks, but it is a lot of money to toss at a standard cartridge.

It is well-done, but if you wish to avoid another arcade shooting match, even if it has nice sound and graphics, then pass it up.

*–Richard A. Edwards*


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TAXMAN (H.A.L. Labs); $23.00. Designed by Brian Fitzgerald. 48K disk for Apple. One to five players; playing time variable. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

"In the land of Tanstaafl the citizens are in revolt, denying the government of its rightful venue, and rioting in the streets. You are the TAXMAN, self-appointed champion of the government coffers. The silly citizens don't know what's good for them, and have developed rebellious tendencies. They are armed and dangerous. To help you there are tax centers in each precinct. Passing through one gives you the temporary power to 'pacify' the angry rebels. But, alas, they are soon back on the streets causing more damage and destruction."

Thus reads the introduction of TAXMAN. This game is very nearly a carbon copy of the arcade game Pac-Man. It has extremely good graphics which are true to the original, right down to blinking blue ghosts after you pass through a tax center (eat a power dot). There is a color or b/w option, so we users with black and white monitors don't have to puzzle out what shade of grey corresponds to a specific color.

The game does have one flaw: You can't use paddles or a joystick, you're forced to use the keyboard. The keys chosen are rather close together, which takes some getting used to. I definitely recommend this game to all who waste too many quarters at arcades, as it is just as addictive as the original.

Incidentally, H.A.L. Labs is offering a $100 prize to the first person who identifies the cartoon after the 23rd level. I've only made it to the 5th level after two weeks of determined effort.

*–Karl Westerholm*

## MINIATURES

ELF CHARIOT (Ral Partha); $10. Sculpted by Tom Meier. 25mm lead miniature chariot; ten parts, including three horses and two crewmen. Released 1982.

This small chariot is a finely-detailed "command" unit. From the distinct (and distinctly inhuman) features of the elf-crew to the rich caparisoning of the horses, it is definitely a *fantasy* offering, and will no doubt find its place in many a fantasy army. Figures of other races could easily be substituted for the elves supplied, and, for those who like a more sinister appearance, very little work would be required to turn the eagle-wings of the chariot into bat or dragon pinions.

No instructions were included in my set, but assembly is only a matter of putting the wheels on the axles and studying the box photo for the proper placement of the "winged shield" part.

My reaction to this set was somewhat ho-hum, and I was at first at a loss to explain why, even to myself . . . it *is* attractive and well-cast. But I've seen chariots before. At two feet, only the wings distinguish this from several historical chariots. The originality that distinguishes many fantasy miniature sets is somewhat lacking here.

But it's a well-crafted piece, and paints up very nicely. Look it over.

*–Steve Jackson*

ZHODANI MILITARY, SWORD WORLDS MILITARY, IMPERIAL STRIKER FORCE (Martian Metals); $3.50/set. 12 15mm figures per set in bubble pack. Approved for use with ***Traveller***. Released 1982.

Martian Metals is busily adding more 15mm figures to its line of approved-for-***Traveller***

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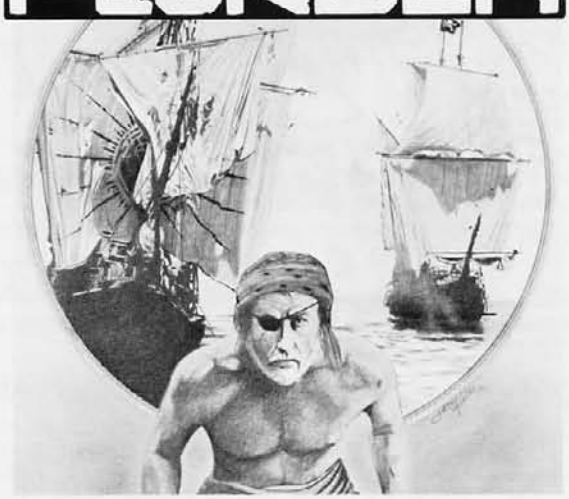

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As if that weren't enough, each of the year's remaining eight issues will contain a *complete adventure game supplement.* Coming issues will feature ***Lair of the Fat Man,*** a ***Top Secret*** mission by W.G. Armintrout; ***Warlord of the Western Plains,*** a ***Morrow Project*** scenario; and ***Westway,*** a ***Car Wars*** campaign set in England!

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miniatures. Among the latest are three packs of figures all ready for battle stations during the Fifth Frontier War – ZHODANI MILITARY, SWORD WORLDS MILITARY, and IMPERIAL STRIKER FORCE. The Zhodani pack features figures clad in the distinctive Zhodani battledress. The Sword Worlders are slightly lower tech level troops with smaller weapons, and are apparently clad only in cloth armor (or bare uniforms) with beret-type caps. The Imperial Striker Force is the lowest tech-level force of the three and features figures in various poses with a variety of small arms, plus a miniature of the map box featured on the cover of GDW's ***Striker*** miniature rules (in fact, the Force itself could have almost been designed from the cover art).

The figures reflect the general high quality of MM's 15mm figures – not quite as nicely detailed as Ral Partha's 15s, but still quite acceptable. Flash and defects are minimal. Plus, MM seems to finally have gotten away from the prevalent spread-eagle poses that so many of the earlier sets displayed.

Complaints are minimal on these sets. I'm still waiting for some of those turbaned Zhodani nobles, a prototype of which was displayed at last year's GenCon. But this set was designed as fighting troops, so the omission is understandable – especially since this set is so much more satisfying than the earlier Zhodani set. The Sword World troops have little to really distinguish them as Sword Worlders, their berets making them similar to the earlier Mercenaries sets, so that some might find them superfluous. Still, there are some nice poses in the set.

Overall, the 15mm miniature enthusiast will probably find all three sets of use, as will ***Traveller*** players and refs who use the miniatures in their role-playing campaigns. MM continues to improve in this line.

*– William A. Barton*

## PLAY AIDS

TRAVELLER DICE (Gamescience); $4.00. Four 5/8" dice in bubble pack. Released 1982. Approved for use with ***Traveller***.

For those of you whose gaming accessories have to be "official" and who also happen to be ***Traveller*** players, Gamescience has now released a set of its high-impact dice officially approved for use with ***Traveller***. The dice come four to a pack and are cast in black with a white sunburst (as seen in the TAS news releases in the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*) and red digital-style numbers.

So what else can be said about dice? TRAVELLER DICE are typical high-quality examples of the species, as are all of Gamescience's. They do add a certain flair to rolling for a vacc suit mishap or a hit with a laser rifle. They're nice to look at, sturdy, and seem to roll nicely on most surfaces (planetary or otherwise).

Of course, one does not really *need* "official" dice for playing ***Traveller***. Any six-siders will do just as well. And at four bucks for four dice, you're going to have to want that "approved for" stamp quite a bit more than most gamers – especially if you have to keep tabs on the finances like some of us do.

Still – what can I say? – I bought a set, just for the novelty of it. And they *do* look somewhat more impressive than regular dice when rolling up that random encounter for the players. (In other words, Gamescience probably isn't going to lose money on these.)

*– William A. Barton*

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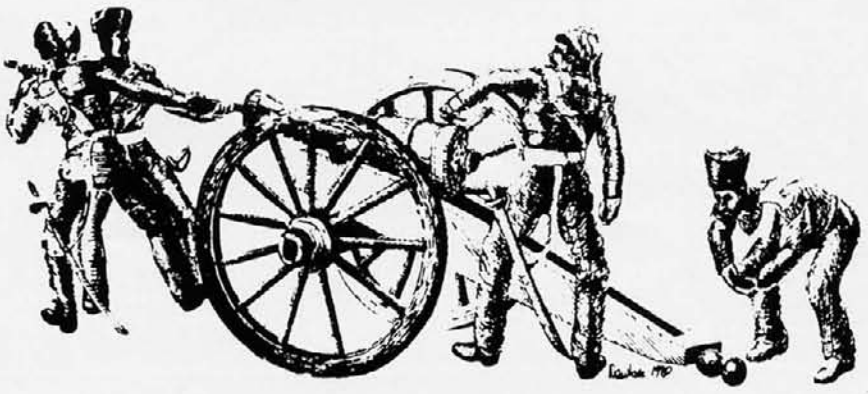

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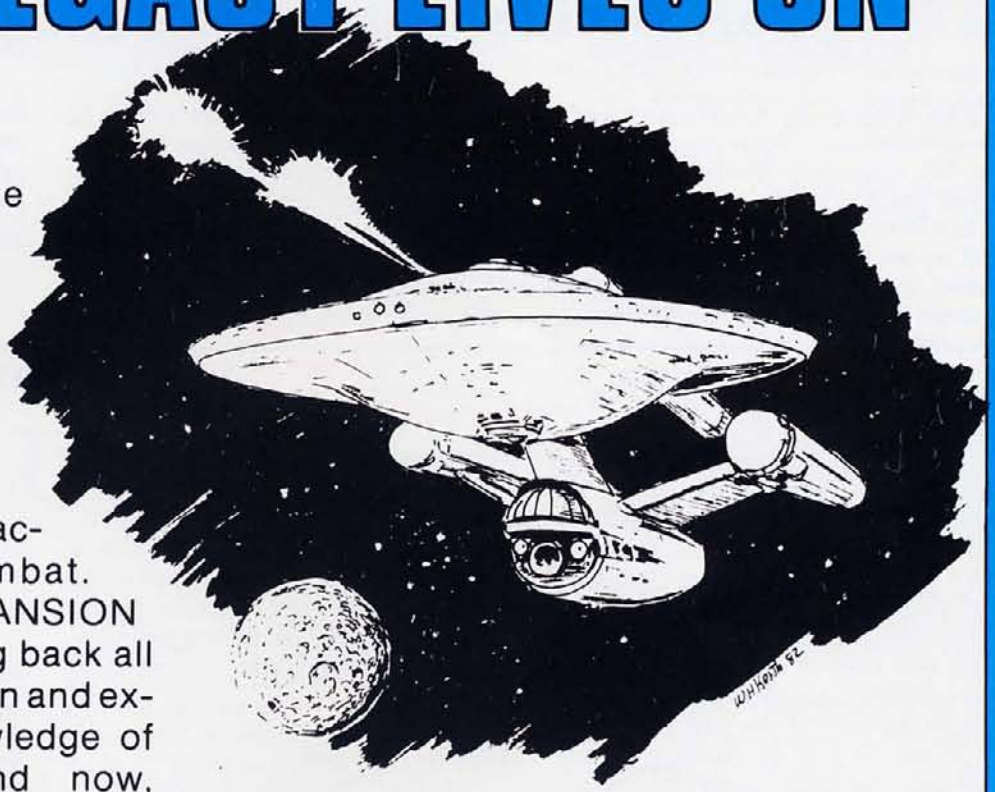

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# TSR Decides Fate of SPI Magazines

TSR Hobbies, Inc. has recently reported its decision on the eventual fates of the SPI magazines, *Strategy & Tactics, Moves,* and *Ares.*

In a letter to SPI magazine subscribers, TSR reported its perspective of the events leading up to the SPI takeover and announced its decision regarding former subscriptions to the magazines.

As had been theorized by industry observers, *Moves* will be folded into S&T, S&T and *Ares* will both be published bimonthly at 64 pages; games will appear in each magazine every other issue. The hanging subscriptions to the magazines will not be picked up by TSR; the company instead will be offering "two-for-one" subscriptions to former subscribers – purchase of a one-year sub will net the buyer two years of magazines. S&T lifetime subscribers are offered the same deal, with the addition of free back issues dating before the start of the lifetime subs.

Despite increasing reports of discontent among lifetime subscribers, only one lawsuit filed against TSR by a lifetimer has been reported to TSG. Preliminary analyses by legal advisers indicate the TSR is in a very good position legally, and that individual lawsuits by lifetimers don't stand a very high chance of success; on the other hand, the nuisance value of these actions will have to be dealt with by TSR. The company's good legal position comes from its method of acquiring the copyrights and trademarks to the Simulations Publications products: TSR loaned approximately half a million dollars to SPI; the collateral against the loan was the aforementioned rights and trademarks. When repayment for the loan was not forthcoming, TSR picked up those trademarks and copyrights without acquiring any of the debts or liabilities to the company.

# News Briefs

**FASA to Produce Deathworld**

FASA, publisher of ***Traveller*** supplements and the ***Behind Enemy Lines*** RPG, has negotiated an agreement with author Harry Harrison to turn his *Deathworld* trilogy of novels into a science-fiction RPG. The game's appearance is tentatively scheduled for the summer convention season of '83.

**Paranoia Press Folds**

Paranoia Press, producer of such well-known ***Traveller*** supplements as ***SORAG*** and ***Scouts and Assassins,*** has confirmed that it will "cease to be" once current inventory is exhausted; the existing stock is being sold to distributors at a 70% discount. The company is also seeking a buyer for the copyrights to its five ***Traveller*** supplements.

**Spy-Game Agreement Negotiated**

Flying Buffalo, Inc. and Hero Games are currently negotiating a cooperative licensing agreement for their upcoming spy role-playing games. Under the terms of the agreement, all adventure supplements and scenarios for Hero's ***Espionage*** and FBI's ***Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes*** games will be usable with either game.

**Nuts & Bolts Returns**

*The Nuts & Bolts of PBM,* which temporarily ceased publication in April '82, will be returning to a publication schedule as *The Nuts & Bolts of Gaming.* Primary concentration will still be on PBM, but the scope of editorial coverage will be extended to SF&F "face to face" games as well.

**GDW, Avar Sign License Agreement**

Game Designers' Workshop has signed a licensing agreement with Avar Products of Denver, CO. Avar will be producing mounted "adventure boards" of starship deck plans, player aids, and referee aids for ***Traveller*** for the upcoming Christmas season.

# New & Upcoming Releases

Strategic Simulations, Inc., will be releasing ***The Warp Factor*** for the IBM; the game will cost $39.95. SSI also intends to release a genuine computer monstergame, ***Guadalcanal Campaign,*** which can last up to 80 play-hours. The game can also be played solitaire; it retails for $59.95 for the 48K Apple.

***Manifest Destiny*** is the PBM offering of Viking Enterprises; each player guides a "nation destined to become a superpower." Setup fee is $5.00 and includes rulebook and setup turn; thereafter, turns are $3.00. Viking Enterprises can be contacted at 5500 Closeburn Rd., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Midkemia Press has released ***Jondril: Gateway to the Sunken Lands,*** a city setting compatible with "most popular Fantasy Role-Playing Games on the market today."

***Star Traders,*** an outer-space trade computer game, has been released by Hayden Software; it's $19.95 for the 48K Apple II.

***Prisoner 2,*** sequel to the ***Prisoner*** program, has been released by Interactive Fantasies; it is in Applesoft and requires 48K (and $32.95).

***Star Frontiers,*** TSR's long-expected science fiction RPG, was finally released at GenCon, along with ***Gangbusters,*** an RPG of G-men and speakeasies, and ***Dawn Patrol,*** a WWI game, all retailing for $12. TSR also entered the computer game field with ***Dungeon!,*** the computer version of their boardgame, and ***Theseus and the Minotaur.*** Both games are $25 and are for the 48K Apple II.

Flying Buffalo has released the second-edition rules to ***Heroic Fantasy***; they are free to anyone who bought the first-edition rules.

# Convention Calendar

October 1-3: ARMADILLOCON 4. SF convention. Contact c/o Robert Taylor, P.O. Box 9612 NW Station, Austin, TX 78766.

October 2-3: TOL-CON '82. Gaming con. Contact Mind Games, 3001 North Reynolds Road, Toledo, OH 43615.

October 8-10: WIN GAMES III. To be held at University of Manitoba. Contact the University of Manitoba Wargames Club, Box 80, University Centre, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

October 9-10: MADCON IV. FRP. miniatures, wargames. Contact Mark Anderson, c/o Pegasus Games, 222 West Gorham, Madison, WI 53703 with SASE.

October 29: STARCON '82. Strategy, tactics, RPGs. Contact Ignacy Lipiec, 229 East 22nd Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5V 1T8 Canada.

October 29-31: FALL SCI-FI CONVENTION. SF, Halloween programs, costume contest, RPG rooms. Contact @ 213/337-7047.

November 5-7: WARGAMERS WEEKEND. Contact Chris' Game and Hobby, 83 Lafayette Road, Salisbury, MA 01950, or call 617/462-8241.

November 12-14: MDG WINTER GAMEFEST. Boardgames, miniatures, RPGs. Contact MDG, W-11 Info, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

November 12-14: WESTERN RECON '82. SF &F, fantasy gaming. Contact Karl Miller, 837 North University Village, Salt Lake City, UT, 84108, 801-582-6076.

January 22-23, 1983: WINTER CAMPAIGN II. RPGs, boardgames, Napoleonics. Contact Winter Campaign, P.O. Box 14630, University Station, Minneapolis, MN 55414-0630.

February 26-27, 1983: GAME FAIRE. RPGs, micro-armor, chess, arcade games, etc. For information, contact Shannon Ahern, Book and Game Company, West 621 Mallon, Spokane, WA 99201 or 509/325-3358.

March 5-6, 1983: CENTCON I: ***Squad Leader, D&D, Backgammon, Risk, Kingmaker, Top Secret,*** etc. Contact Ron Vincent, Treasurer – CentCon I, 471 Commonwealth Avenue, New Britain, CT 06053.

*July 14-17, 1983: ORIGINS '83. Adventure gaming con. Contact MDG, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

SJ GAMES and TSG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

# PBM Update

### EARTHWOOD
### (Game Systems, Inc.)

The first eight games are proceeding strongly. Games 9 and 10 are now open for new players.

*Game 1:* The bitter hatred has ceased between the Athians and the High Elves. Rumors of an alliance are stirring. The Hill Dwarves have stormed and taken the Halfling Citadel of Snuvelton. Rumors spread of a wizard's research brewing in the Giant Kingdom.

*Game 2:* A huge force of Mammoth Men mined beneath the Rumonian City of Rume, taking the defenders by surprise. A fierce, sorcerous battle resulted in victory for the Conjurer over the Necromancer and his undead minions.

*Game 3:* In spite of losing three cities in rapid succession, the High Elves continue their siege of Escobar. Alliances are being sought.

*Game 4:* A three-player alliance and a growing Empire are the current major forces to date. Ill omens run rampant as large numbers of Wizards flock to Linden. Rumors of a large Halfling army afield continue to flood local taverns.

*Game 5:* Tales of a clever thief entering and stripping the treasury of Yumuri have many Lords tightening security. The Anorocians continue to annex nearby ruins.

*Game 6:* A devastating defeat has hurt the morale of the Giantas as they were driven from the walls of Asturia. The Gnomes and their allies, however, have tasted sweet victory in wars against the Mountain Dwarves and Halflings.

*Game 7:* The upstart "Stardom" has found only bitter hatred or staunch support on all fronts. Revenge drives the Forest Elves on their march towards Escobar. Meanwhile, the Rangers continue recruitments of large numbers of NPCs to swell their armies' ranks.

*Game 8:* Only weeks old, already alliances are formed and battlelines have been drawn. This will be an interesting and dangerous game.

*Peter Stassun*

### UNIVERSE II
### (Clemens & Associates)

*Company News:* The special version of ***Universe II*** for players in Europe continues to grow at a rapid pace. European residents wishing to join may contact ICBM, P.O. Box 100 Bath Street, Walsall, West Midlands, UK.

*Game News:*

*Quadrant I:* Where will the Regajian expansion lead to next? Rumors say either Arturus or Vindemiatrix will be next. The uncertainty about the Eohippan Alliance has ended: they have disbanded.

*Quadrant II:* No major wars are currently active. Most groups seem to be building up their defenses.

*Quadrant III:* The power of the PAF Alliance has been broken by the SA and CSA ships. The star system in BA17 has been reclaimed.

*Quadrant IV:* The Unity Alliance ships are consolidating their gains. The final intention of their activities in the former Regajian empire is unknown.

*Regajian Empire:* The empire is stronger than ever in Quadrant I. It is rumored that the loyal RSS ships and the dissident RSS/UFO ships will soon reconcile their differences.

*Ixtli Empire:* Plans are under way to launch a counterattack against the Regajian forces which have expanded up to our borders.

*Muar Empire:* Task Force 4 of the Muar Raiders is conducting a recon-in-force toward the Alkes area. Reinforcements have arrived from Quadrant IV.

*Jon Clemens*

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# LETTERS

This letter is a rebuttal to the "Murphy's Rules" presented in issue 53 of *The Space Gamer.*

At Hero Games, we carefully research all aspects of the rules that we write. In order to provide proper background material for the section on "Falling" in the ***Champions*** rules, we threw, pushed, or defenestrated our playtesters from tall buildings. With a test sample of 43 people, we found that 28 of them were able to walk away from a three-story fall onto concrete (though some of them did need some coaxing).

Once the playtesters recovered, we tested the effects of a ten-story plummet. This second test was more difficult to organize, as some of the playtesters evinced some reticence to this aspect of playtesting. However, with some persuasion, we conducted the second test, this time with only 37 people (some of the other playtesters were still in intensive care). We found that 17 people survived the fall, which we felt was pretty good, considering how damaged some of them were.

Thus, it is clear that the "Murphy's Rules" was incorrectly lampooning a good rule, and I hope that a suitable retraction is published.

Hero Games
Belmont, CA

*Thanks, guys. I imagine that there's an entertaining story behind the creation of your "breaking things" systems, too. However, as some sections of Belmont are still standing, it looks like your research on that section wasn't as intensive . . .*

*–AA*

I am amused to see that David Hargrave is claiming (issue 54) that ***Arduin*** is "all original." Sure. Uh-huh. And the Russians invented the airplane.

***The Arduin Grimoire*** first came out in 1977, a year which Hargrave apparently believes "predates" ***D&D.*** It was plainly and simply a supplement to ***D&D.*** In fact, in the "Forward" [*sic*], Hargrave referred to the ***Grimoire*** as "this supplement." He made a number of disparaging remarks concerning greedy "non-amateur game designers" who tried to suppress pure-hearted amateurs such as himself if their products "even remotely resembled any those big businesses types had published." He was careful not to mention TSR or ***D&D*** by name.

As an "original" creation, the ***Grimoire*** was a disappointment. It was very sloppy and poorly organized. It did have "characters" and "monsters" with "level," "alignment," "hit dice," "saving throws," and "experience points." Each of the character races, including human, elf, dwarf, and hobbit, had a range of characteristics which included strength, intelligence, wisdom, dexterity, constitution, and charisma. There was an equipment list that included everything on the original ***D&D*** list, down to the belladonna and wolfsbane. There were tables with special abilities for all of the ***D&D*** character types. There were lists of spells, including "mage," "cleric," and "druid." There was a cleric-vs.-undead table. There was a combat table that required a "01-20 Die Roll to Hit, By Level," against various armor classes, ranging from nine to two ("Full plate armour with shield"), with plusses above. There were many assorted tables and rules which seemed to fit neatly into the ***D&D*** system. And, oh yes, each of the monsters listed had "% liar."

In his "Forward," Hargrave said "This supplement is basically original, and conceived by myself." Now he says ***Arduin*** is "all original."

The prosecution rests.

Forrest Johnson
North Hollywood, CA

What can I say? TSG and SJ Games just keep getting better and better. For gosh sakes, keep it up . . . there are few enough quality magazines available nowadays.

The recent TSGs have been, quite simply, fantastic. "The Lone GEV" in TSG 52 was a great story, and Forrest's article was useful, especially to those GMs (or FMs, or whatever) who hadn't bothered to do much work in that area. "A Super Named John" was one of the best superhero stories I've read in years (I'm an avid comic book collector). TSG 54 was especially pleasing, with "The Conjuring" and "Magic Backlash" stealing the show from everything else. I look forward to Allen Varney's ***Necromancer*** next issue. Keep it coming, guys!

Now for just one little complaint (there's always one, isn't there?). The way you've got things set up now, a subscriber can't get his bonus on an order without tearing off the cover of his magazine. I may be in the minority, but I keep my mailing covers on my copies of TSG and can't stand the thought of tearing them off. Isn't there a better way to accomplish things? Won't photocopying work just as well as sending you the original cover?

Let's see those 48 pages sometime soon, huh?

So much for now. Until next time, I bid you and yours

Good Gaming!
Steve Woodcock
Sullivan, MO

*We've never objected to a photocopy, Steve. It's just startling to us that so many people actually do keep their mailers; the mailer covers were originally designed as a throwaway attached merely to protect the magazine.*

*As for 48 pages, we'll instead be trying to stick to 44 pages on slick paper. Keep your fingers crossed.*

*–AA*

The purpose of this letter is to apologize to those subscribers to this magazine who attended Origins '82 and were literally turned away from the Avalon Hill booth at closing time.

Such a situation is really a testimonial to the success of the National Gaming Convention itself, thanks in great part to the Hobby Industry whose promotional funds allowed GAMA to promote this event heavier than normal. And, too, many game manufacturers exceeded their obligations by promoting Origins '82 heavily on their own.

Such an outpouring of promotion resulted in the largest convention attendance ever in my experience. And I've attended many!

Unfortunately at closing time, 5 pm Sunday, we had no alternative but to begin tearing down our exhibit booth in accordance with the regulations laid down by the college. This, of course, disappointed many attendees still hoping to be serviced at the booth and it is to them Avalon Hill offers this public apology.

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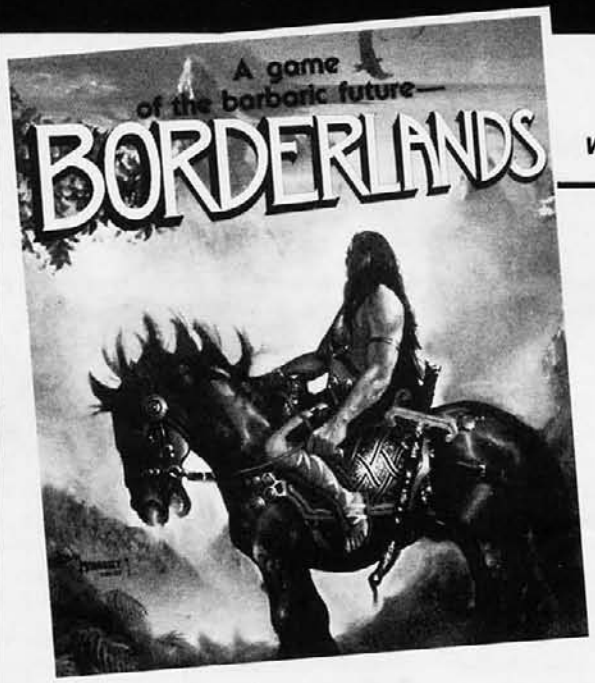


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